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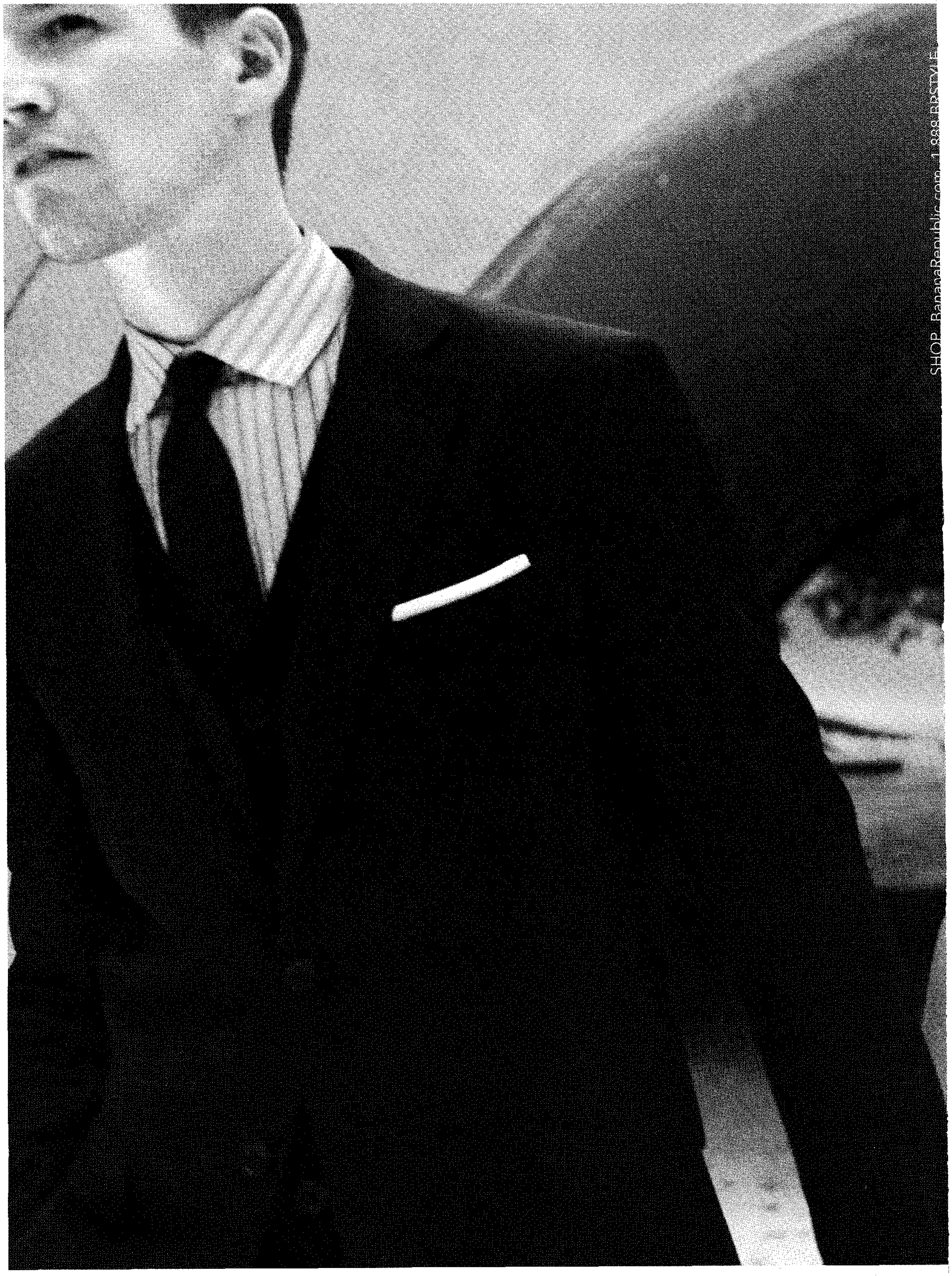
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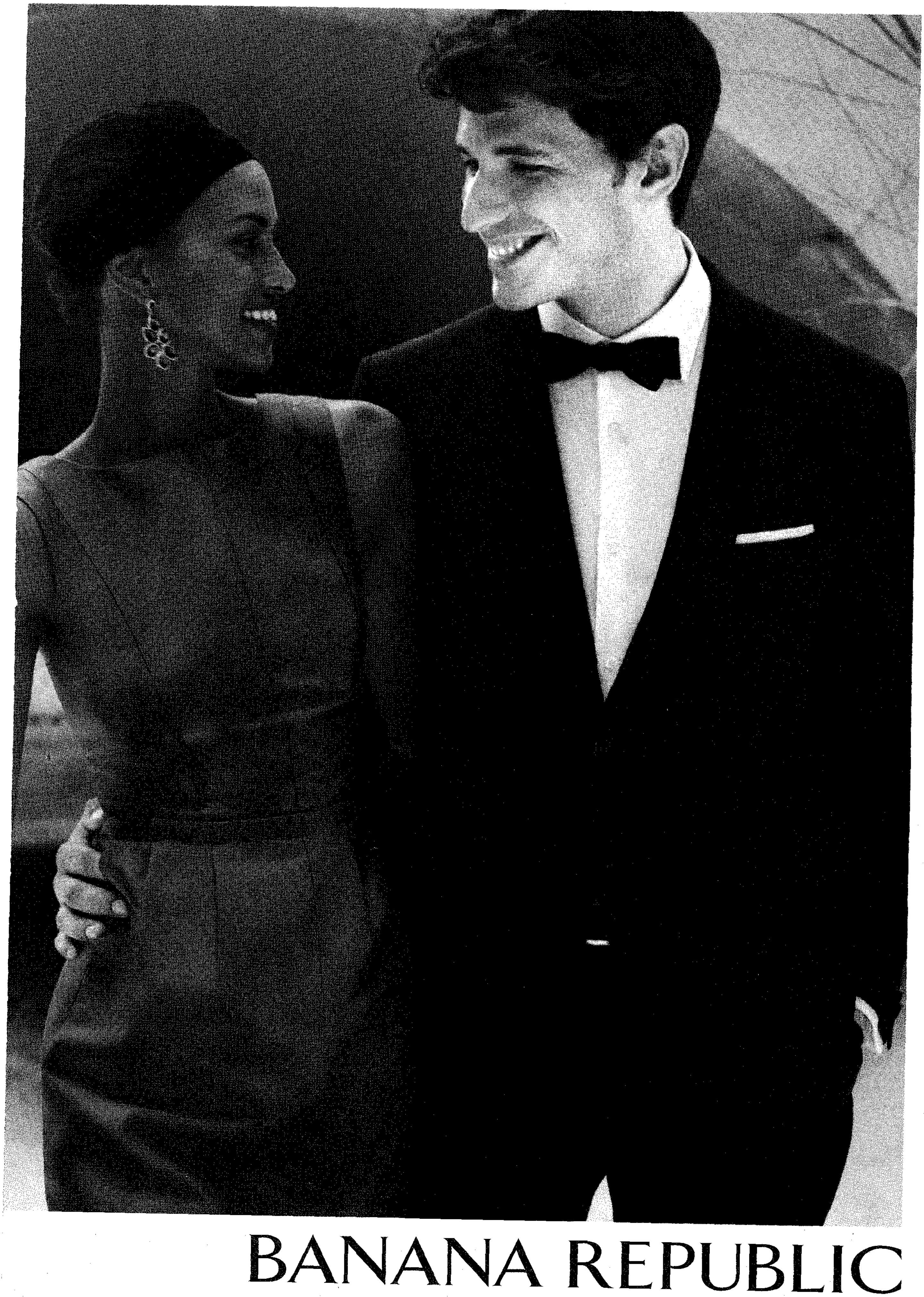
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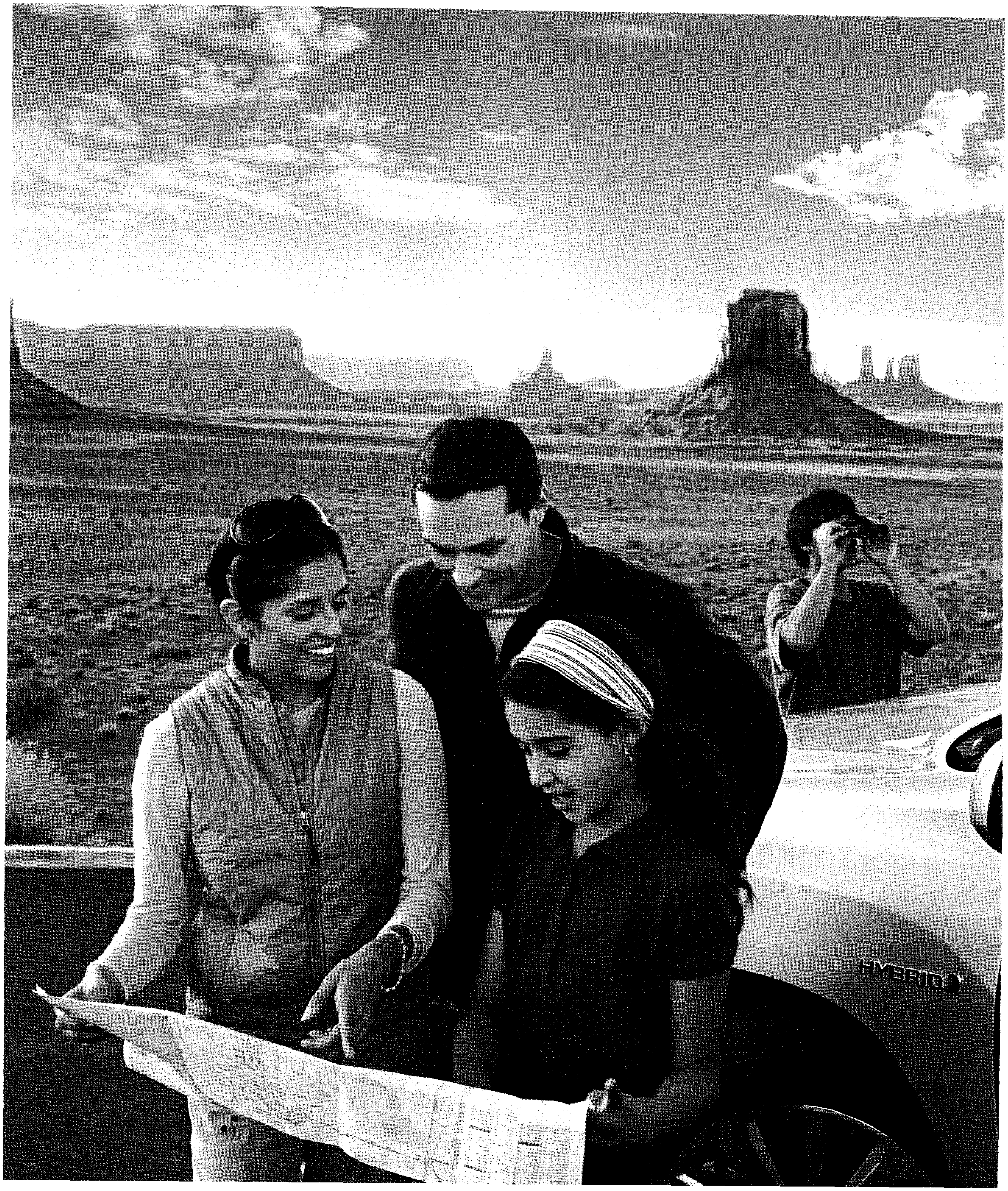
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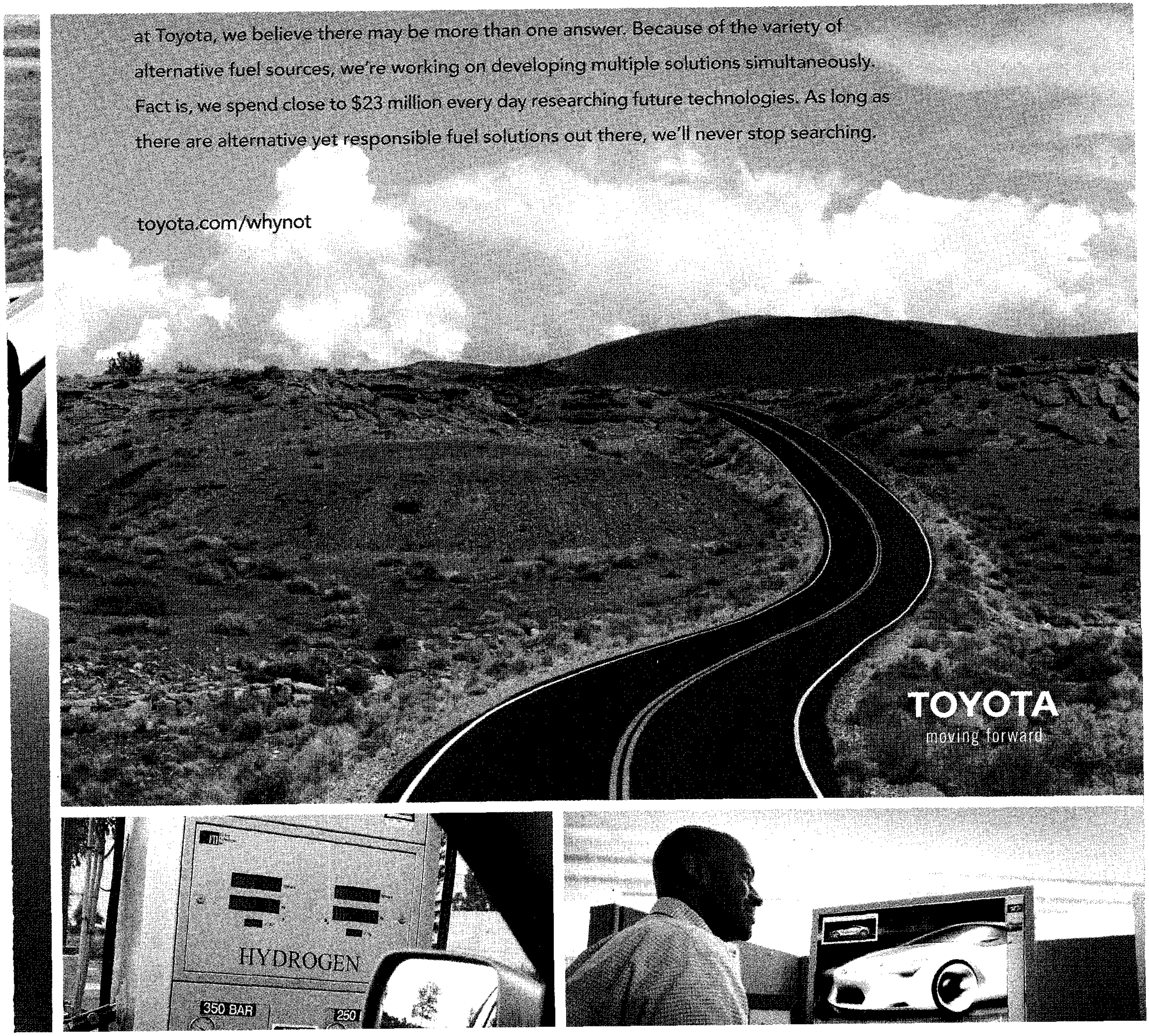

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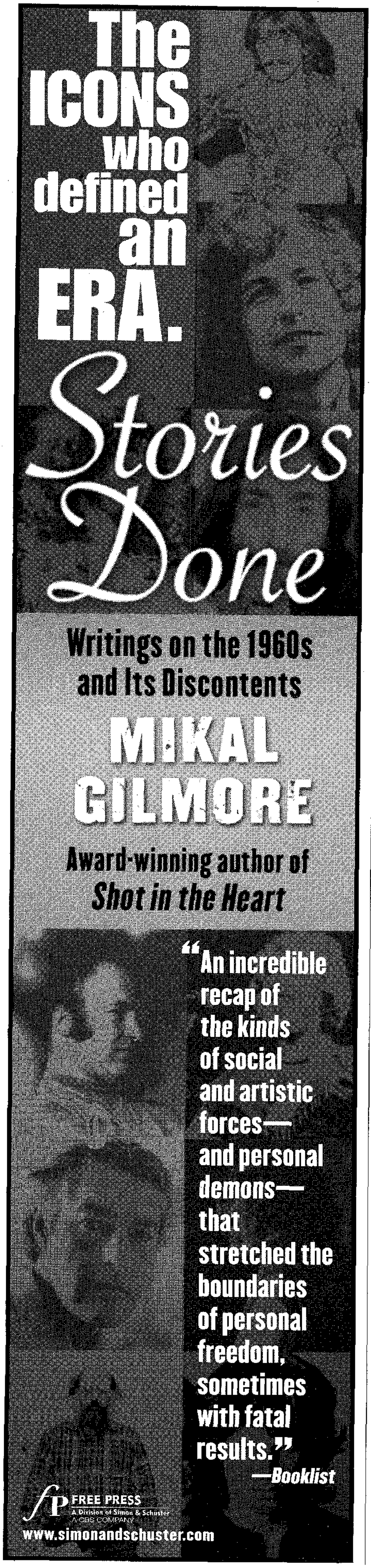
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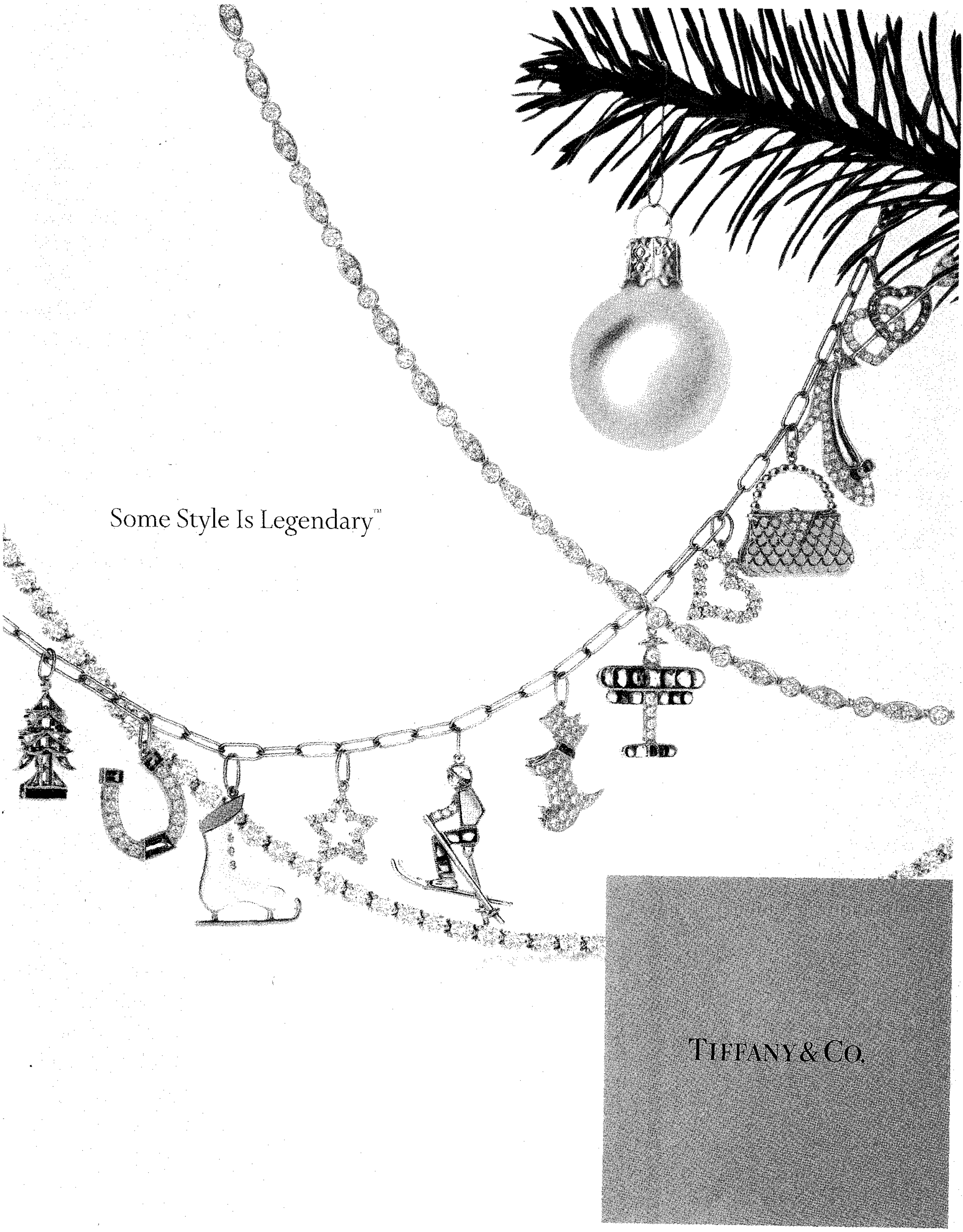

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CONTRIBUTORS

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 27), the author of "Politics: Observations & Arguments," writes frequently about politics and policy. He also writes a blog on newyorker.com.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. ("Family Matters," p. 34), is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard. He is the author of "In Search of Our Roots" and the editor of "Lincoln on Race and Slavery," both of which are due out early next year.

Bruce McCall (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 39) published his first children's book, "Marveltown," in September.

Amanda Fortini ("Special Treatment," p. 40) is a writer living in Los Angeles.

Clive James (Poem, p. 58) has written fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. "Opal Sunset: Selected Poems, 1958-2008" came out in September.

Lauren Collins (The Talk of the Town, p. 28) is a staff writer.

Harry Bliss (Cover) published his first cartoon collection, "Death by Laughter," in July. He has illustrated ten children's books, including "Louise, The Adventures of a Chicken" and "Diary of a Spider."

John Cassidy ("Anatomy of a Meltdown," p. 48), a staff writer, is the author of "Dot.Con: How America Lost Its Mind and Money in the Internet Era." He is currently working on a book entitled "How Markets Think."

David Owen (The Talk of the Town, p. 31) is the author of "In Sickness and in Power: Illnesses in Heads of Government During the Last 100 Years."

Daniyal Mueenuddin (Fiction, p. 64) lives in Pakistan's Rahim Yar Khan district. His first book of stories, "In Other Rooms, Other Wonders," comes out in February.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 74) has a new book, "Snark," which will be published in January.

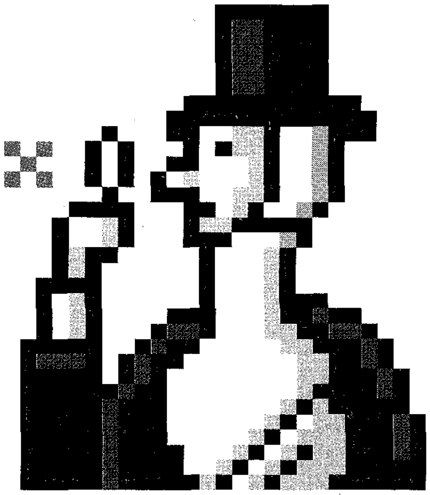
Stanley Moss (Poem, p. 70) is a poet, editor, and Old Master picture dealer. "New and Selected Poems 2006" is his most recent collection.

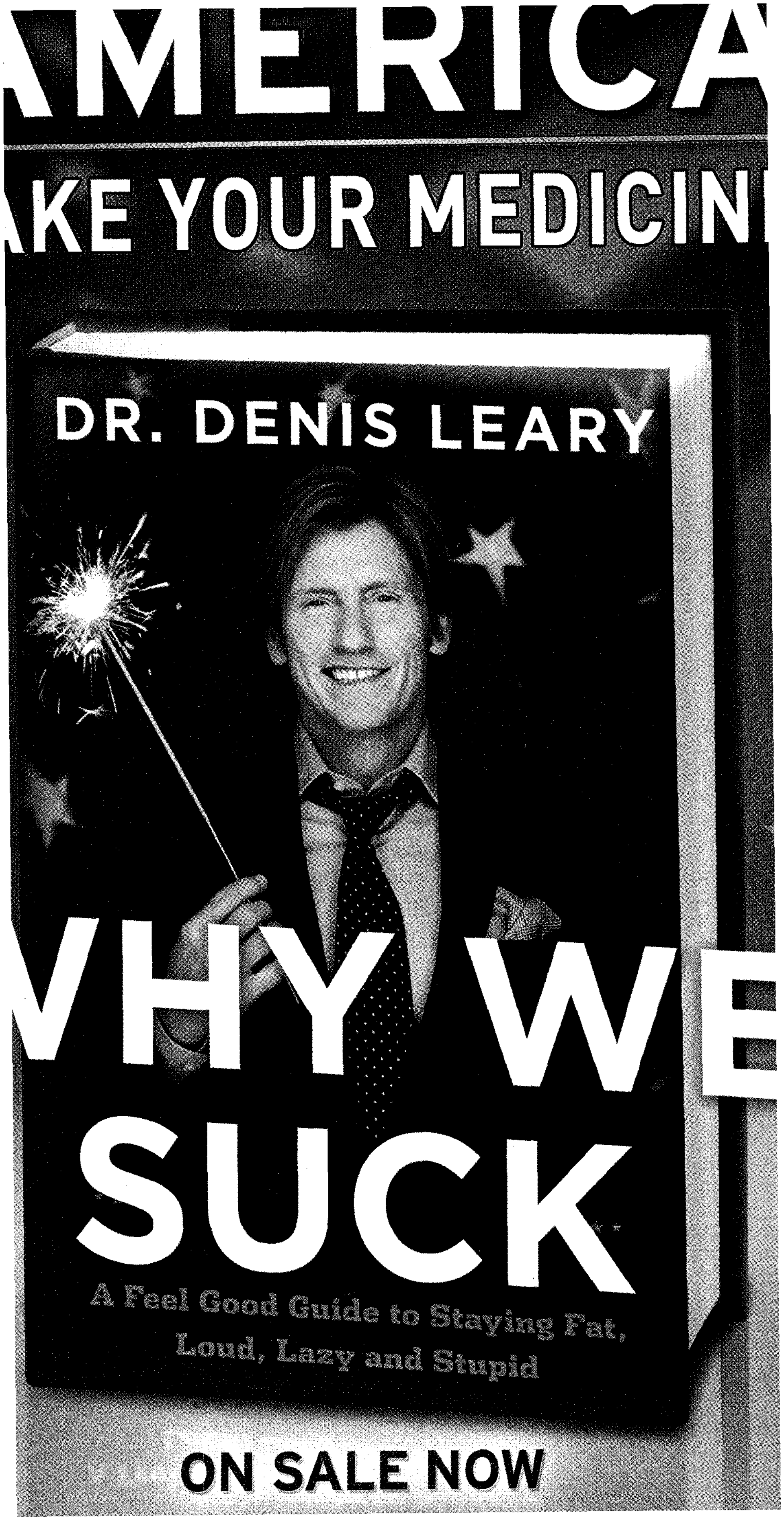
James Wood (Books, p. 77) teaches at Harvard. His books include "How Fiction Works" and "The Broken Estate."

Hilton Als (The Theatre, p. 85) holds the Joan Leiman Jacobson Professorship in Non-Fiction Writing at Smith College.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Blogs: *James Surowiecki* and *Steve Coll* on the economy, *Hendrik Hertzberg* and *George Packer* on politics, *Sasha Frere-Jones* on pop music, plus the Book Bench, the Cartoon Lounge, and Goings On. / Audio: A roundtable about the White House transition, hosted by *Dorothy Wickenden; James Wood* on V. S. Naipaul. / Slide show: Photographs and documents from *Henry Louis Gates's* family. / Ask the Author: *Amanda Fortini* takes questions. / From the archive: *Paul Theroux* and *Hilton Als* on Naipaul, and a complete archive of every issue. / Animated cartoons and the caption contest.

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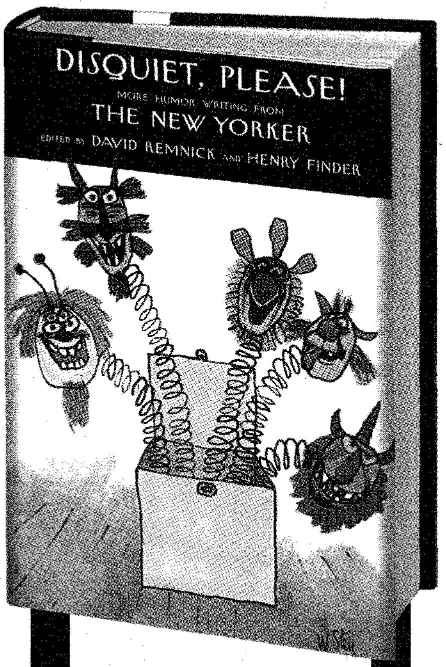

An uproarious sampling of humor writing from *The New Yorker*, including fancies, rebukes, asides, and musings from

Woody Allen
Noah Baumbach
Adam Gopnik
Steve Martin
Patricia Marx
S. J. Perelman
David Sedaris
Calvin Trillin
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BRINGING UP BABY

Joan Acocella's piece on overparenting brought to mind an incident that occurred on my doorstep this Halloween (Books, November 17th). A mother and father, who appeared to be in their early thirties, and their little girl, who was dressed in a lion's costume, came to the door. As I profferred chocolates and candy corn, the parents hovered nervously. "Now, just take one," they instructed. I asked the little girl, "Are you the Cowardly Lion?" The father replied hastily, "Oh, no, Amy, you're the brave lion, aren't you?" Her head popped up between the lion's jaws and our eyes locked. "Dad, I am too the Cowardly Lion," she said, in a small, irritated voice.

Daphne Abeel
Cambridge, Mass.

Acocella cites the pressures of two parents working outside the home, the global economy, and research on brain plasticity in the early years in her discussion of overparenting. But I see two other factors: the loosening of ties to extended family and the decline of participation in communities of faith. Both normally provide much-needed perspective on child-rearing, which may go a long way toward mitigating the kind of "spoiling" Acocella describes in her review. Because parents today tend to be older than in generations past, extended families may not exist. But there are churches, synagogues, mosques, and other communities of faith that emphasize that the individual is not the center of the universe, and, what's more, that he or she has a responsibility to help and serve others. It seems to me that this is a lesson to be learned not so much by the children of these hyperanxious parents but by the parents themselves.

Amy Slaughter Myers
Baltimore, Md.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Margaret Talbot, in writing about teen-age pregnancy, focusses on sex and abstinence education, religion, and media messages ("Red Sex, Blue Sex," November 3rd). The main reason that the United States has the highest rate of teen pregnancy among comparable nations, however, is that youth here suffer the highest rate of poverty. States with high proportions of Evangelical Protestants (mainly Southern and border states, led by Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Alabama) are in most cases the poorest. Long-term studies by the Duke University economist V. Joseph Hotz and his colleagues have shown that childbearing during teen years is not necessarily an irrational economic choice for poorer populations, and that is why teen-pregnancy rates are highest among Latinos and African-Americans. The endless sex-education-versus-abstinence and religious-versus-irreligious message wars are obscuring the urgent need for solid investments to reduce epidemic poverty and enhance education and job opportunities for youth.

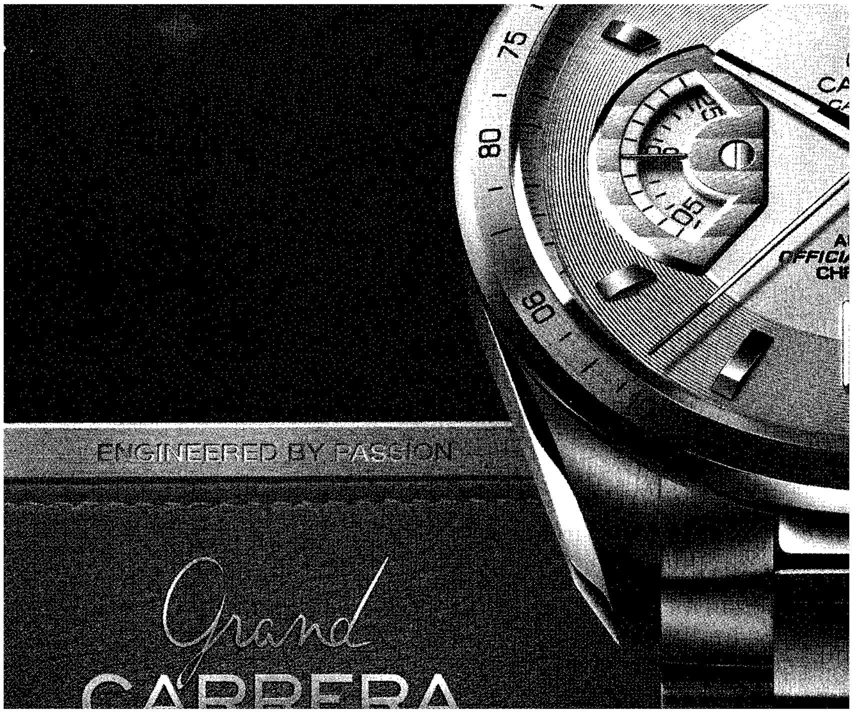
Mike Males
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Talbot's article points out some obvious problems with a negative, "mortify the flesh" view of human sexuality. With years of development and increased understanding, sexual theology has deepened and widened greatly since the days of St. Augustine. Pope John Paul II's theology of the body is the most recent landmark in the progression toward a true understanding of the gift of sexuality. The promulgation of texts such as the Pope's treatise "Man and Woman He Created Them," or Christopher West's more elementary "Theology of the Body for Beginners," and the truth they contain, will help us all to come to a more thorough understanding of who we are in relation to He who made us.

J. D. Crook
Emmitsburg, Md.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.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CARRERA

On the set of the movie "Cadillac Records." Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	1	2	26	27	28	29

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
MAN ABOUT TOWN

The actor-director Austin Pendleton is involved in two New York shows. Downtown at La Mama, he directs "Lillian Yuralia," a drama by Barbara Eda-Young; meanwhile, at the Beckett, he stars in "The Black Monk," a new chamber musical by Wendy Kesselman. (See pages 12 and 13.)

NIGHT LIFE
HOT STUFF

The King Khan & BBQ Show has a spirited and primitive take on the early days of rock and roll. The two performers—Khan plays guitar, BBQ drums, they both sing—pack the power of ten amphetamine-fuelled musicians. They play the Bowery Ballroom and the Music Hall of Williamsburg. (See page 13.)

ART
FIRST PICTURE SHOW

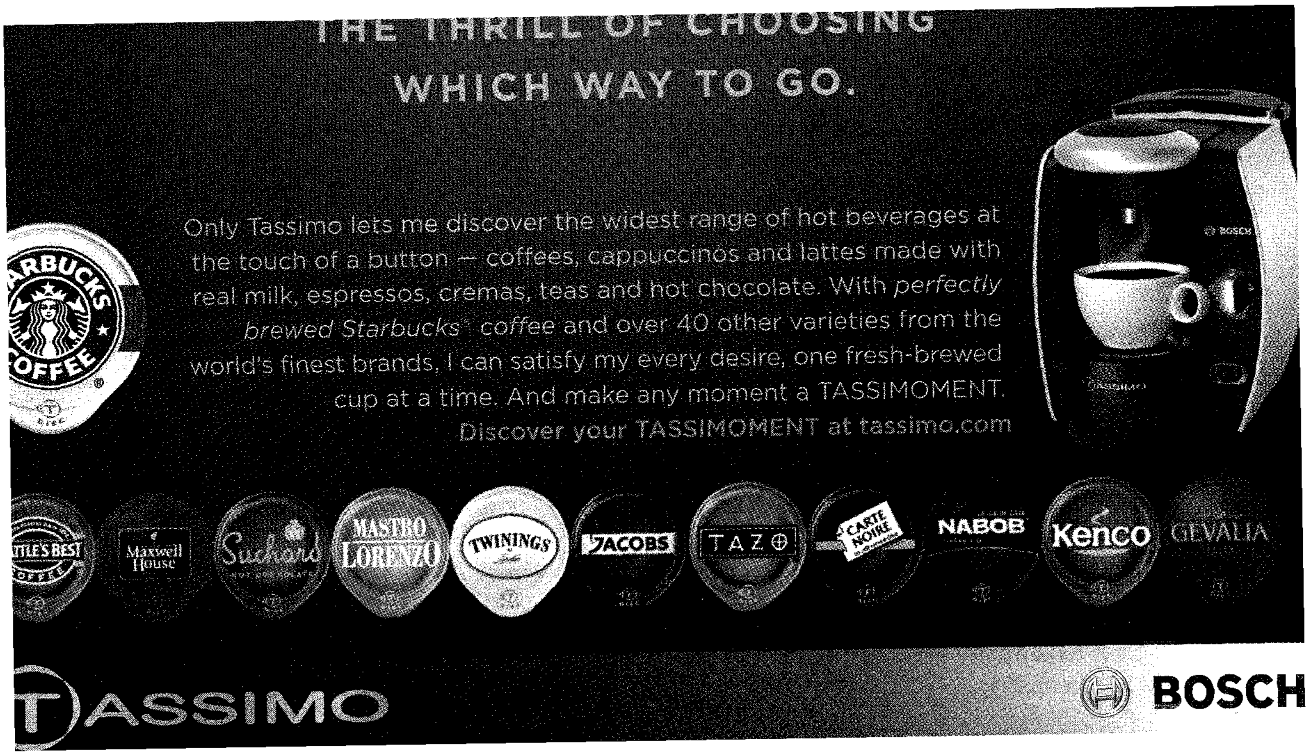
Jessica Lange is best known for her star turns in movies like "Blue Sky" and "Tootsie," but before she was an actress she studied photography. Lange makes her solo début at the Howard Greenberg gallery with a show of black-and-white pictures shot in the past fifteen years in locations from Minnesota to Ethiopia. (See page 16.)

MOVIES
FORTY-YEAR CHEER

On the occasion of a lifetime-achievement award from the Independent Feature Project, MOMA offers a tribute to the seminal independent filmmaker Melvin Van Peebles ("Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song"), who will be on hand to introduce a screening of his first feature, "Story of a 3-Day Pass," from 1968, and a première of his latest, "Confessionsofa Ex-Doofus-ItchyFooted Mutha," which co-stars his son Mario. (See page 24.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
POST-STUFFING

Have that extra glass of Pinot Noir and a third helping of sweet potatoes: Shorewalkers' annual Walk Off the Turkey eleven-mile outing, from South Ferry to the Little Red Lighthouse along Manhattan's West Side, on the Saturday following Thanksgiving, will give you a chance to make amends. (See page 24.)



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
SECOND ACT

When Liza Minnelli appeared on the cover of *Time* in 1972, she was the twenty-seven-year-old star of "Cabaret"; the magazine dubbed her "The New Miss Show Biz." Has there ever been a more accurate headline?

HOPE GANGLOFF

Before she was even in kindergarten, Minnelli was in front of the cameras; being on a movie set was like going home. Her parents were Mama Judy, of course, and the brilliant film director Vincente, each of whom imparted to their only child a great understanding of the audience: trust them to love you if you give them your all. Minnelli's second home has always been Broadway, and she returns to the Palace on Dec. 3 for almost four weeks in her best role: herself. Inspired by the intimate yet flamboyant stage shows that her godmother and idol, Kay Thompson, put on in the forties, Minnelli will showcase her voice, which is as big as Mama's but less sentimental. Meryl Streep has described Minnelli's desire to communicate something deep and true to the audience, all the way up to the balcony, as astonishing. The neophyte took what she could from a master.

—*Hilton Als*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BEASLEY'S CHRISTMAS PARTY
The Keen Company presents Booth Tarkington's comedy, directed by Carl Forsman. Previews begin Dec. 2. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE BLACK MONK
Kevin Newbury directs a chamber musical by Wendy Kesselman, based on Chekhov's story about an artist from a small village who must negotiate the challenges of his rising success. In previews. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

GIMPEL TAM
Folksbiene mounts a musical adaptation of Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story, written and directed by Moshe Yassur, about the victimization of a gullible orphan. In Yiddish, with English supertitles. In previews. (JCC, 334 Amsterdam Ave. 800-595-4849.)

HOME
Three actors perform twenty-five roles in Samm-Art Williams's 1980 play. Set in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, it tells the story of a man who leaves his family in North Carolina and heads for New York City. In previews. (Signature Theatre Company, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

OPENING NIGHT
The Flemish director Ivo van Hove interprets John Cassavetes's movie "Opening Night," in a play presented by Toneelgroep Amsterdam and NTGent. Opens Dec. 2. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

OUT CRY
The National Asian American Theatre Company revives Tennessee Williams's play, in which two siblings who are abandoned by their travelling theatre company put on a show about themselves. Thom Sesma directs. Previews begin Nov. 29. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

PAL JOEY
At Studio 54, Roundabout Theatre Company presents the Rodgers and Hart musical from 1940, with a book adaptation by Richard Greenberg, in which an aspiring night-club owner leaves his girlfriend for a wealthy older woman. Joe Mantello directs a cast that includes Christian Hoff, Martha Plimpton, and Stockard Channing. In previews. (254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

PRAYER FOR MY ENEMY
Playwrights Horizons presents the New York première of a new play by Craig Lucas ("Prelude to a Kiss"), directed by Bartlett Sher, about an Iraq-war soldier and his alcoholic father, who is a Vietnam vet. Starring Victoria Clark, Michele Pawk, and Jonathan Groff. In previews. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

SHREK THE MUSICAL
DreamWorks Theatricals presents the musical adaptation of the film, with a book and lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire ("Rabbit Hole") and music by Jeanine Tesori ("Caroline, or Change"). Jason Moore ("Avenue Q") directs; Brian d'Arcy James and Sutton Foster star. In previews. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW ON BROADWAY
The Russian clown Slava Polunin presents his snowstorm spectacular. Previews begin Dec. 2. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

TOO MUCH MEMORY
Keith Reddin and Meg Gibson wrote this contemporary adaptation of the Antigone myth, which won the New York Fringe Festival's Outstanding Play award this year. Previews begin Dec. 2. (Fourth Street Theatre, 83 E. 4th St. 212-868-4444.)

NOW PLAYING

BACK BACK BACK
A nine-inning drama about professional baseball players who risk their reputations and that of the national pastime by doing steroids sounds like a strikeout but is, in fact, a hit. Spare, fast-paced, entertaining, and superbly acted, Itamar Moses's new play takes place between 1984 and 2005. Two athletes at the top of their games (Jeremy Davidson and James Martinez) are American heroes, but that's not enough—they want to be physical supermen, and they don't mind cheating to get there. Things get more complicated when an innocent young rookie (Michael Mosley), playing only for the love of the game, invites himself into their inner circle. Well directed by Daniel Aukin. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL
Fans of Lee Hall and Stephen Daldry's 2000 movie, set in northern England in the mid-nineteen-eighties, about a boy who quits boxing to take up ballet, may notice that Daldry's musical adaptation, with songs by Elton John, lacks a few of the film's charms—nuanced characters, the memorable final scene, T. Rex. But it does have a satisfying combination of hardscrabble wit and populist brio that's especially exciting to see on Broadway. Three boys alternate in the title role; in a recent performance, Kiril Kulish danced thrillingly as Billy, and David Bologna was terrific as his cross-dressing friend, Michael. The show ably demonstrates dance's power to free the soul and inspire the crowd, and does so without an overabundance of schmalz. In one of the best numbers, bobbies, striking miners, little girls in tutus, Billy, and his teacher dance together, belting out the words "solidarity forever." (Imperial, 240 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DAWN
Incest, pedophilia, and filicide are nothing new for the playwright-provocateur Thomas Bradshaw, but noticeably absent from his latest play—about the implosion of a well-off New Jersey family at the hands of its alcoholic patriarch—is one of his biggest subjects: black people. In his most daring and mature work to date, Bradshaw seems to be posing some serious questions about the banalities of the "great American epic family drama" genre. Unfortunately, under the glib direction of Jim Simpson, who seems more interested in the play's cheap shocks, only a few of the actors (notably Gerry Bamman and Laura Esterman) seem to be in on the joke. The result is a confusing, static treatment of a script that deserves better. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

DIVIDING THE ESTATE
Horton Foote's play about a Texas clan squabbling over finances moves to Broadway, and just in time: money-minded audiences will be pleased to know that the estate tax can be funny. Elizabeth Ashley howls and hoots as the matriarch, who vows to keep the family's property intact. As her acquisitive daughter, who has different ideas, Hallie Foote runs away with the show, clucking her father's dialogue with impeccable joylessness. But what makes the play so charmingly batty is its obsessive-compulsive focus. The characters argue incessantly about dividing the estate, and not even the intrusion of death can stop them. Shrewd and admirably restrained, the play (directed by Michael Wilson) is quietly potent in its suggestion that cash is thicker than blood. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS
Revived and revamped, Martha Clarke's 1984 dance-theatre fantasia on the theme of Hieronymus Bosch's sixteenth-century triptych more than retains its power to beguile and startle. Taking us through Eden, the seven deadly sins of the Middle Ages, and the tortures of Hell in a little more than an hour, Clarke keeps her striking images flowing—and, with the help of harnesses and pulleys, flying. Instead of transcending the earthly realm, the aerial sections, swinging from sensual to brutal, only amplify the world's carnality and remorseless violence. Like Bosch's, Clarke's vision of doom is full of life. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-4100.)

IRVING BERLIN'S WHITE CHRISTMAS
David Ives and Paul Blake adapted the classic film for this musical, just in time for the holidays. Walter Bobbie directs. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.)

LILLIAN YURALIA
At La Mama, Austin Pendleton directs Barbara Eda-Young's drama, set in the nineteen-thirties on the Lower East Side, about a bereft woman who attempts suicide. (74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through Nov. 30.)

ROAD SHOW
John Doyle directs the New York première of a musical by Stephen Sondheim (music and lyrics) and John Weidman (book). (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

SHOGUN MACBETH
Shakespeare's Scottish play is transported to twelfth-century Japan in this Kurosawa-lite adaptation by John R. Briggs, which is given an atmospheric but uneven revival by the Pan Asian Repertory. The plot and the Anglo-Saxon names remain the same, but Lady Macbeth wears a kimono, everyone carries a katana, and the witches are white-faced spirits in Day-Glo wigs. Ernest Abuba, who originated the title role twenty-two years ago, directs with an eye for a balanced stage picture but without an ear for the language or any sense of why the play is so enduring. With substance being sacrificed for style, any glimmer of freshness is lost amid the ethnic drag show. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

STREAMERS
When the curtain rises on the Virginia-barracks setting of David Rabe's 1975 drama (under the muscular direction of Scott Ellis), a recruit is pacing, saying, "I just can't stand it." His wrist has been bandaged after a suicide attempt. "We've got to make up a story," Richie (Hale Appleman), a gay soldier, says. He's talking about the recruit, but Rabe is talking about the military itself, and the fiction that it imposes order on chaos. It's 1965, and the men are being dispatched to Vietnam; the barracks are a kind of safe house, the bonds of friendship the only fortification that the soldiers can build between themselves and terror. Caprice arrives in the hulking shape of Carlyle (Ato Essandoh), a transgressive black soldier full of rage and riffs, who comes wanting to befriend Roger (J. D. Williams), another black recruit. The competent cast of this production hits the notes but not always the music of Rabe's writing; nonetheless, his vision is vivid and devastating. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/24/08.) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

TAKING OVER
Danny Hoch wrote and performs this meditation on the gentrification of New York City, in a New York première. Tony Taccone directs. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

Also Playing

ALL MY SONS: Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BLACK WATCH:** St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. **BLASTED:** SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 212-352-3101. **BOEING-BOEING:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FARRAGUT NORTH:** Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 29. **THE GRAND INQUISITOR:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. Through Nov. 30. **GYPSY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **IF YOU SEE SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through Nov. 30. **THE LANGUAGE OF TREES:** Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **MOUTH TO MOUTH:** Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **SATURN RETURNS:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **THE SEAGULL:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **SLEEPWALK WITH ME:** Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 212-239-6200. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **SPEED-THE-PLOW:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

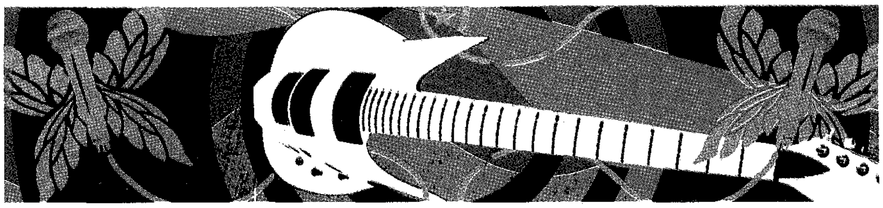
BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Nov. 26 and Wednesdays: The Guinean guitarist Mamady Kouyaté leads the **Mandingo Ambassadors** in a vibrant set that recalls a time in his country's history, forty years ago, when the government provided musicians with night clubs where they could rework traditional rhythms using Western horns and guitars. Nov. 29: The **Moonlighters** are a charming local band (two singers, two ukuleles, an upright bass, and a steel guitar) with a penchant for swinging Hawaiian tunes from the twenties and thirties, such as "Hula Blues" and "Honolulu March," along with a few originals in the same style. Nov. 30 and Sundays: The French guitarist **Stephane Wrembel** summons the ghost of Django Reinhardt.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 25-26: When twentieth-century blues musicians like Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf plugged in, they put together bands that became prototypes for countless rock groups that followed. **Hubert Sumlin** was Wolf's longtime guitarist, laying down iconic riffs on such classics as "Built for Comfort," "300 Pounds of Joy," and "Killing Floor." He's celebrating his seventy-seventh birthday with **John Sebastian, David Johansen, Jimmy Vivino, Levon Helm**, and other admirers. Dec. 1: **Dave Mason**, a true member of British rock royalty, acted as a foil to Steve Winwood and Jim Capaldi in the legendary jazz-rock ensemble Traffic.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 28-29: **Stephen Kellogg & the Sixers** wrap heartfelt subjects in feel-good piano-driven melodies. The Northampton, Massachusetts, group has been at it for five years, and any day now one of their songs will be used in a prime-time TV drama or an ad for a fuel-efficient subcompact. With the **Pat McGee Band**, an outfit from Richmond that's been sipping from the same well. Nov. 30: The **King Khan & BBQ Show** is a raucous act with a soft spot for the early heroes of rock and roll.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 26: **Los Amigos Invisibles**, a groovy dance band with roots in Venezuela. Nov. 28: The Guns N' Roses tribute band **Mr. Brownstone** is fronted by Sean Greenhalgh, who is a member of a slightly more famous and esteemed act, the exuberant indie-rock ensemble Clap Your Hands Say Yeah. After years of playing the same songs, Greenhalgh and his friends will have to get busy learning new Guns N' Roses tracks: the band's long-delayed album, "Chinese Democracy," has just been released.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Nov. 28: The eye-patch-wearing rap veteran **Slick Rick** was born in England, but he made his name in the Bronx in the early eighties. His 1988 Def Jam début album, "The Great Adventures of Slick Rick," established his reputation as one of hip-hop's most influential and distinctive voices; his troublesome attitude toward women and his embrace of material goods have been copied, but his accent and his lyrical sense remain his own. After the release of his first album, he was convicted of attempted murder, for shooting his cousin. He spent five



JOHN RITTER

POP NOTES
PETAL TO THE METAL

Remember September, 1991? It was the month of Tailhook and of Tajik independence. Arkansas's little-known governor, Bill Clinton, was about to announce his candidacy for the Presidency. And the rock band Guns N' Roses, led by the twenty-nine-year-old singer Axl Rose, released a pair of records, "Use Your Illusion I" and "Use Your Illusion II," full of charging, nasty hard rock and overblown ballads. The group followed up in 1993 with a nonessential record of covers and proceeded to fall apart. And then there was only Axl Rose, working—always working, if you believed the reports—on a new album, which he said would be called "Chinese Democracy." Five years passed, then five more, and five more after that.

At some point, the absence of the album became a sort of presence. Rock and roll seemed poorer without Rose's inhuman yowl—every time I heard two cats fighting, I got my hopes up—but richer, somehow, thanks to the never-ending saga of the album's nonexistence: Rose's perfectionism and possible psychosis, his equally crazy cornrows, the bottomless pit of musicians, producers, money. Now that **"Chinese Democracy"** (Geffen) is an actuality, it's hard not to treat the music as an afterthought. But it's a temptation worth resisting. Though the first single, the title song, has been savaged, it offers a refresher course in Guns N' Roses fundamentals—punishing riffs, angry vocals—along with a gratuitous mention of Falun Gong. Elsewhere, the record is more sprawling, for better and for worse. "Shackler's Revenge" is as confusing and aggressive as its title (shouldn't revenge properly belong to the shacklee?). Whereas the band's touchstones used to be the Rolling Stones and Aerosmith, Rose's tastes—helped along, no doubt, by fifteen years of fiddling—have grown ornate to the point of derangement. Most of the songs are as modest as a rococo cathedral. That style can drag down the hard-rock compositions, which traffic mostly in paranoia and resignation; even the stronger ones ("Better," "There Was a Time") are short on clean pop hooks. The standouts are the ballads, which should surprise no one who remains under the spell of "November Rain." "If the World" sounds like a Bond theme, its melody swelling over a skittering bed of electronica, and the poignant "Street of Dreams" demonstrates that although Rose's vocals don't have quite the power they once had, he remains one of the most compelling rock singers out there. He certainly is out there.

—Ben Greenman

years in jail, and then, in 1999, delivered a comeback album, "The Art of Storytelling," featuring Outkast and Snoop Dogg. In 2002, he was almost deported by the I.N.S., which detained him during a post-9/11 crackdown on noncitizen felons. He spent almost a year and a half in detention before he was released. He remained in legal jeopardy until Governor David A. Paterson pardoned him, earlier this year.

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Dec. 2: The Angelenos in **Darker My Love**, which takes its name from a song by the legendary California punk band T.S.O.L., play brooding neo-psychedelic rock. The similarly inclined group the **Strange Boys**, from Austin, and the local act **Blonde Acid Cult** set the stage with equally creepy vibes.

MUSIC HALL OF WILLIAMSBURG

66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-486-5400)—Nov. 29: The **King Khan & BBQ Show** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

PIANOS

158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—Dec. 2-6: The locals in **Stellastarr***, whose last album, "Harmonies for the Haunted," released in 2005, was steeped in jittery post-punk tempos and glossy New Wave themes, are working on a follow-up, due out next year.

(LE) POISSON ROUGE

158 Bleecker St. (212-796-0741)—Dec. 2: Barcelona's Pablo Díaz-Reixa, who records and performs under the name **El Guincho**, is a musically omnivorous trickster. He samples everything from children's choruses and cheering crowds to steel drums and American doo-wop on his latest album, "Alegranza!"

TERMINAL 5

610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—Nov. 29: **State Radio**, from Massachusetts, straddles the chasm between urgent social commentary and jam-band indulgence. There's enough ska influence and lefty sloganeering in the group's music to placate the Doc Martens set, while their penchant for laid-back grooves keeps the long-haired dancers happy. With **Anti-Flag**, a quartet of retro-leaning punk rockers from Pennsylvania who trade in unrelenting (but engaging) agitprop-tinged music.

WEBSTER HALL

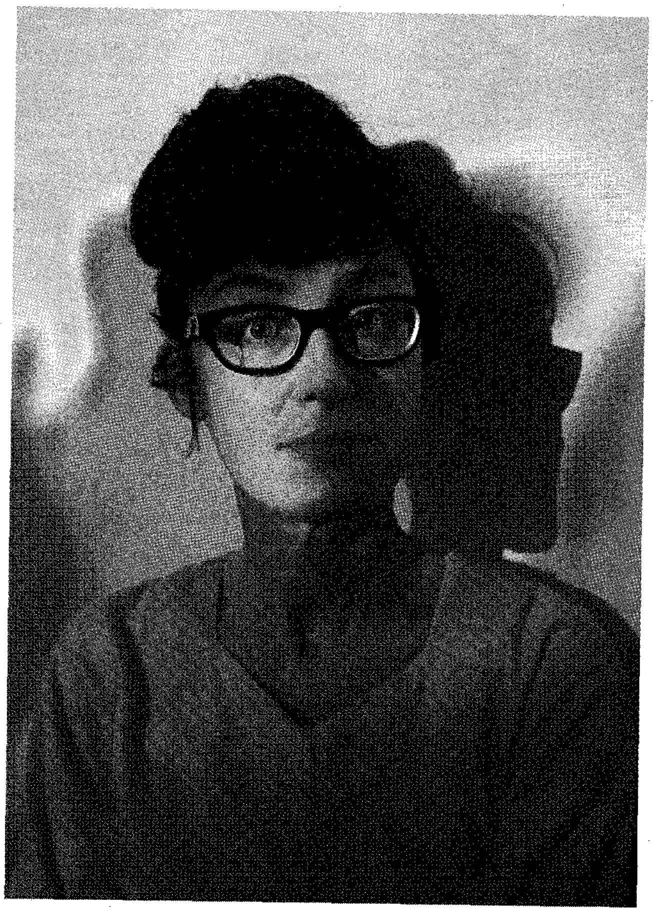
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Dec. 2: **Dr. Dog**, out of Philadelphia, leavens its fuzzy indie rock with unexpected vocal harmonizing. The result is an appealing blend of catchy melodies and groovy rhythms.

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 25-30: The arranger, composer, and bandleader **Maria Schneider** takes full advantage of loyal players, who include **Donny McCaslin, Frank Kimbrough,** and **Clarence Penn,** to bring her impressionistic, large-ensemble pieces to life. The Mingus tribute bands are in rotation here on Mondays.

SMALLS

183 W. 10th St. (212-252-5091)—Nov. 27: The pianist **Ehud Asherie** performs duets with the neo-swing saxophonist **Harry Allen.**



The artist Pipilotti Rist, in her video installation at MOMA.

TINA TYRELL

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Nov. 26-29: **Christine Ebersole,** whose recent triumphant run on Broadway in "Grey Gardens" cemented her status as a titan of contemporary musical theatre, is joined by the perennial cabaret M.V.P. **Billy Stritch.**

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Nov. 27: Among male jazz singers who emerged in the nineteen-fifties, **Mark Murphy** is a living legend to fans who treasure his highly personal interpretative style. Nov. 28-30: The pianist **Dave Brubeck,** who is in his late eighties and still very much in the game, fronts a quartet.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA

Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Nov 25-30: Two like-minded musical souls—the guitarist **Bucky Pizzarelli** and the clarinettist and saxophonist **Ken Peplowski**—lead a quintet in a program of songs by Harold Arlen, Hoagy Carmichael, and Duke Ellington.

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Nov. 27-30: **Dr. Lonnie Smith,** one of the remaining old-school masters of the Hammond organ, heads a trio. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—The master drummer **Paul Motian** juggles a handful of bands, all of which have one thing in common: his presence guarantees that the musical conception will be brainy and the rhythms as quirky as they are subtle. His Trio 2000 Plus 2 (here Nov. 25-30) calls on the strengths of the saxophonists **Chris Cheek** and **Loren Stillman,** as well as the pianist **Masabumi Kikuchi.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Beyond Babylon: Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C."** Through March 15. ♦ **"The Philippe de Montebello Years: Curators Celebrate Three Decades of Acquisitions."** Through Feb. 1. ♦ **"Giorgio Morandi, 1890-1964."** Through Dec. 14. ♦ **"Art and Love in Renaissance Italy."** Through Feb. 16. ♦ **"Landscapes Clear and Radiant: The Art of Wang Hui (1632-1717)."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Raqib Shaw."** Through March 1. ♦ **"New York, N. Why?: Photographs by Rudy Burckhardt, 1937-1940."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"The Essential Art of African Textiles: Design Without End."** Through March 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting, 1927-1937."** Through Jan. 12. ♦ **"Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night."** Through Jan. 5. ♦ **"Pipilotti Rist: Pour Your Body Out (7354 Cubic Meters)."** Through Feb. 2. ♦ **"New Photography 2008: Josephine Meckseper and Mikhael Subotzky."** Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Theanyspacewhatever."** Through Jan. 7. ♦ **"Catherine Opie: American Photographer."** Through Jan. 7. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—**"William Eggleston: Democratic Camera, Photographs and Video, 1961-2008."** Through Jan. 25. ♦ **"Alexander Calder: The Paris Years, 1926-1933."** Through Feb. 15. ♦ **"Corin Hewitt: Seed Stage."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Signs of the Times."** Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"The Black List Project: Timothy Greenfield-Sanders and Elvis Mitchell."** Through March 29. ♦ **"Gilbert & George."** Through Jan. 11. ♦ **"Jesper Just: Romantic Delusions."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Burning Down the House: Building a Feminist Art Collection."** Through Feb. 8. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Climate Change: The Threat to Life and a New Energy Future."** Through Aug. 16. ♦ **"The Horse."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Through May 25. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"The Seduction of Light: Ammi Phillips/Mark Rothko, Compositions in Pink, Green, and Red."** Through March 29. ♦ **"Martin Ramirez: The Last Works."** Through April 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and until 7:30 on Fridays.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Wall Stories: Children's Wallpaper and Books."** Through April 5. ♦ **"Solos: Tulou/Affordable Housing for China."** Through April 5. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DIA AT THE HISPANIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Audubon Terrace, Broadway at 155th St. (212-926-2234)—**"Zoe Leonard: Derrotero."** Through Sept. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 4:30, and Sundays, 1 to 4.)

THE DRAWING CENTER

35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—**"Matt Mullican: A Drawing Translates the Way of Thinking."** Through Feb. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze."** Through Jan. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Susan Meiselas: In History."** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"America**

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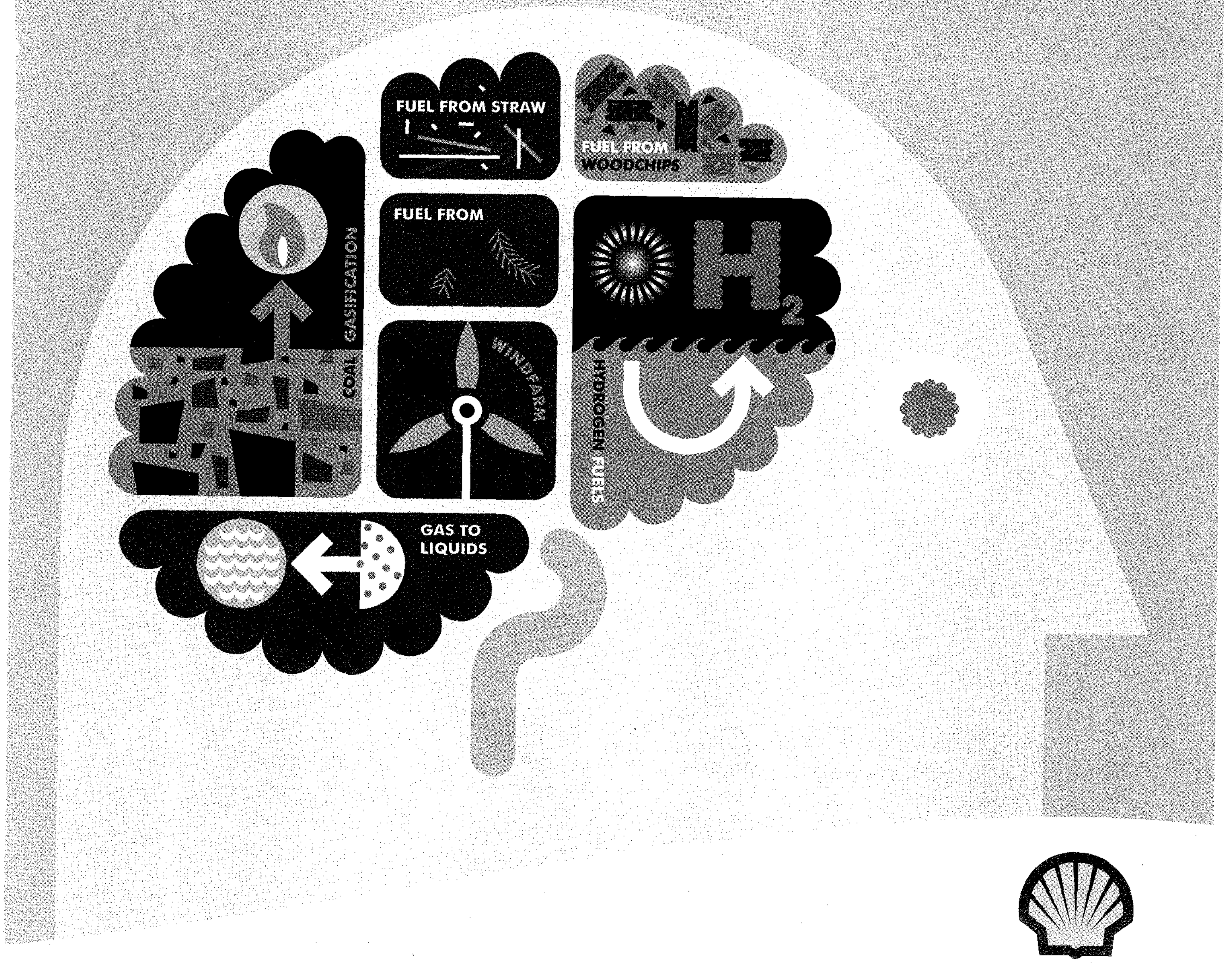
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HYDROGEN FUELS
GAS TO LIQUIDS

and the Tintype.” Through Jan. 4. ♦ **“Cornell Capa: Concerned Photographer.”** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **“Living with the Dead: W. Eugene Smith and World War II.”** Through Jan. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**“Chagall and the Artists of the Russian Jewish Theatre, 1919-1949.”** Through Jan. 4. ♦ **“The Dead Sea Scrolls: Mysteries of the Ancient World.”** Through Jan. 4. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**“Drawing Babar: Early Drafts and Watercolors.”** Through Jan. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**“Mary Heilmann: To Be Someone.”** Through Jan. 26. ♦ **“Live Forever: Elizabeth Peyton.”** Through Jan. 11. ♦ **“Museum as Hub: Six Degrees.”** Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

PALITZ GALLERY
11 E. 61st St. (212-754-5121)—**“Michelangelo: The Man and the Myth.”** Through Jan. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 7. To buy tickets, visit ticketweb.com.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**“NeoHooDoo: Art for a Forgotten Faith.”** Through Jan. 26. ♦ **“Gino De Dominicis.”** Through Feb. 9. ♦ **“Leandro Erlich: Swimming Pool.”** Through April 13. ♦ **“Yael Bartana.”** Through Jan. 19. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**“Barkley L. Hendricks: Birth of the Cool.”** Through March 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

ARI MARCOPOULOS
Marcopoulos made his mark as a photographer of American youth culture—especially the hip-hop and skateboard scenes—but recently family has become his focus. One of his sons is now a rap-loving teen-ager, who performs in the show’s lone video, lip-synching to Tupac. The shaggy-haired boy also appears in three of the eight large black-and-white images here; two others document a signed Warhol catalogue and a vintage muscle car. But Marcopoulos’s subjects are almost incidental to their presentation—in enlarged Xerox copies, which, even streaked, look as velvety and luxurious as platinum prints. Through Dec. 19. (The Project, 37 W. 57th St. 212-688-1585.)

“HELEN FRANKENTHALER AT EIGHTY”
Nine paintings, made in the course of six decades, whisk us through the career of the artist, whose birthday is this month. From the messy, Matissean outpouring of “Western Dream,” from 1957, to the iconic Color Field stains on unprimed canvases from the sixties and seventies, to a serene but pulsatile allover study in lilac and ultramarine, made just a few years ago, gravitas is leavened by grace notes. Pink dollops levitate on acid green; a swipe of orange pops up where one might anticipate blue. The works all come from Frankenthaler’s personal collection—works that, until now, she deemed too dear to sell—and the show has the air of a secret lovingly shared. Through Jan. 10. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550.)

Short List

JOHN BALDESSARI: Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Jan. 10. **JESSICA LANGE:** Howard Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Opens Nov. 26. **JOHN MARIN:** Ward, 44 E. 74th St. 212-744-7306. Through Dec. 20. **PABLO PICASSO:** Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. 212-734-6300. Through Nov. 29. **CINDY SHERMAN:** Skarstedt, 20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060. Through Dec. 20. **JEFF SONHOUSE:** Tilton, 8 E. 76th St. 212-737-2221. Through Dec. 23. **ALEXI WORTH:** D. C. Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-247-2111. Through Jan. 3. **"ISABEL AND OTHER INTIMATE STRANGERS":** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313. Through Dec. 13.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

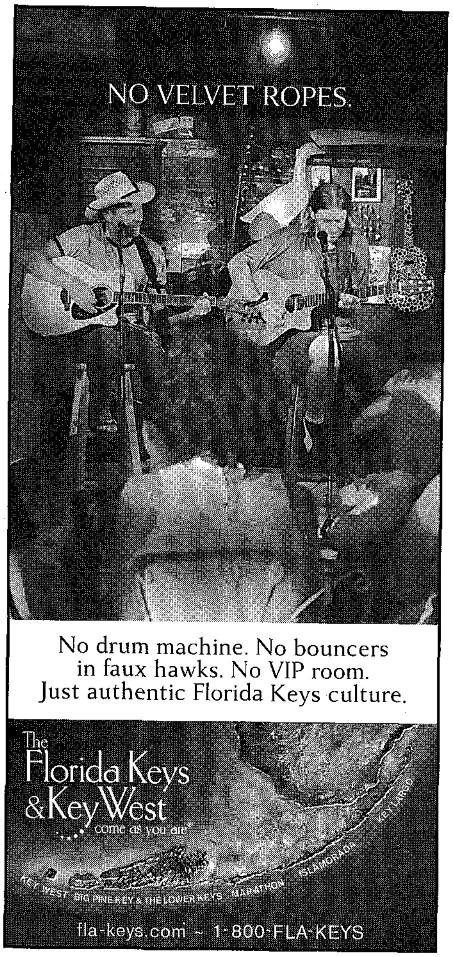
SANDRO CHIA
How not all that bad is Chia? The triumvir of the Italian *transavantgardia* (with Clemente and Cucchi) whose prestige fell first and farthest, in the mid-eighties, has soldiered on with the neo-expressionist charades that made his name and then, on second thought, made it mud. He still depicts muscular characters in narcissistic fantasies, playing at being pirates or cowboys. His facture remains rough and ruddy, in hot and cold running hues. Chia’s works have a distinctive flavor whose persistence should qualify him for the equivocal but sturdy cynosure of a Raoul Dufy or a Kees van Dongen. Through Dec. 18. (Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 212-741-8999.)

DE KOONING, FONTANA, HESSE
An adventure in maverick connoisseurship tests anomalous works by Lucio Fontana (polychrome ceramic sculptures, made between 1940 and 1955) and Eva Hesse (Action-y paintings, most from 1962) against a gold standard of furious expressiveness: works on paper by Willem de Kooning that relate to his brief, brilliant foray into sculpture, in the early seventies. Fontana’s small pieces are flurries of poked and filigreed clay, all hyperactive fingers and thumbs. Hesse’s unsuspected gift for painterly improvisation would be sublimated in her strict later art. The show suggests a jam session of disciplined performers letting their hair down, with de Kooning in the lead on vox-humana saxophone. Through Dec. 6. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

JULIAN FAULHABER
The German photographer makes his New York gallery début with big, glossy color pictures of what look like fabricated or computer-generated sites, in the style of Thomas Demand or Oliver Boberg. But these sleek, depopulated spaces—a cinema, a gymnasium, a restaurant, a gas station, a generic office—actually exist. Most of them are pastel or candy-colored and all appear recently built, with no sign of human habitation. No matter how cheery it may appear, Faulhaber’s world is antiseptic and forbidding. These are not designs for living; they’re just shells waiting for the robots to roll in. Through Dec. 20. (Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006.)

BARNABY FURNAS
It’s to Furnas’s credit that his new paintings squirm away from the facile trope—paint as spurting or engulfing blood—that made him hotly chic in recent seasons. Here he offers yet one more tableau of charging, shot-to-tatters Confederate soldiers, along with other interpretations of dire historical Americana. But the main events are a series of rock-concert scenes, in many-tiered theatres raked with spotlight beams, and one of alluvially textured abstractions evoking dead worlds. As always, Furnas wows with bravura techniques, which now include holes burned in the canvas supports, plus sparkles. Such a show-off! Through Dec. 20. (Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889.)

ANDREAS GURSKY
Although five enormous photographs in two locations would be a major showing for anyone but Gursky, his latest exhibition is not as ambitious or as impressive as usual. Four of the pictures, each more than sixteen feet wide, appear to have been made in the same location—a massive night club in Frankfurt with wavy, perforated walls. It’s seen twice packed with dancers,



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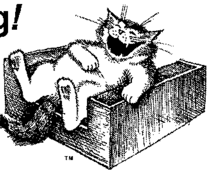

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then empty or nearly so. But the latter two images—one portraying Gursky and his son—were created digitally, in the artist's studio. The single photograph at the 22nd Street gallery is stranger and more resonant: a cascade of wire baskets, hung from the ceiling and filled with the clothes of the miners in the locker room below. It looks like an art installation—a knockout readymade. Through Dec. 24. (Marks, 523 W. 24th St. and 526 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)

KAREN HEAGLE

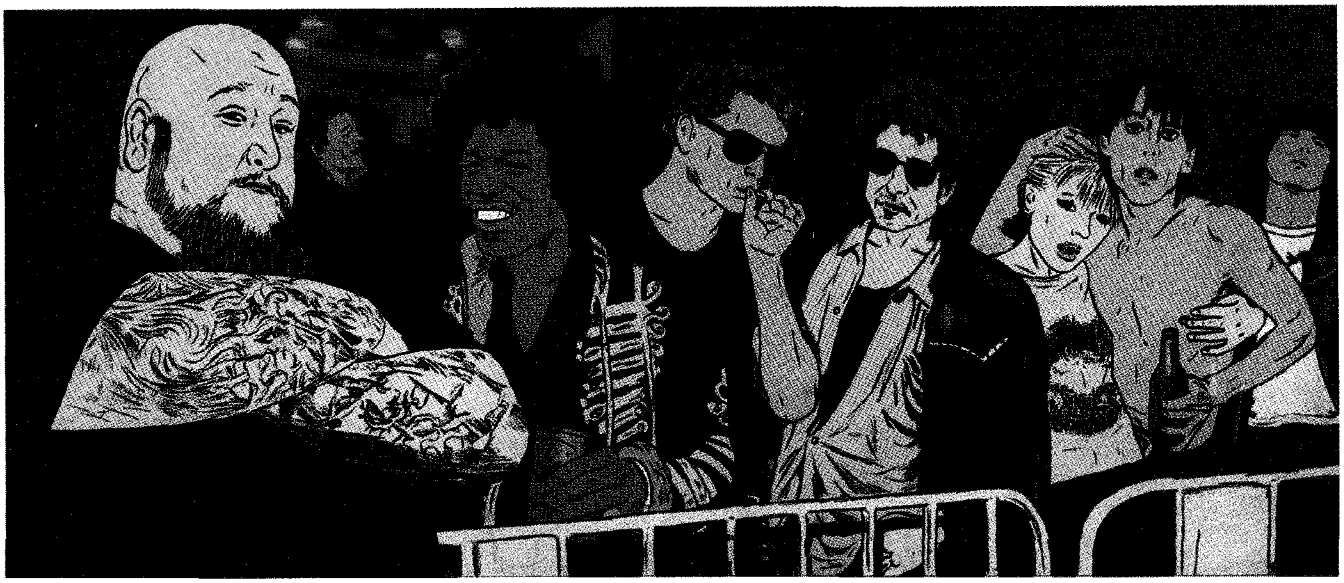
Two things distinguish Heagle's paintings: the fact that they're painted on paper—which gives them the bright look of posters—and their subjects. Even in the anything-goes world of contemporary art, Heagle hits a high note of oddness. A pregnant man with a Fauvist flecked beard caresses his belly. Voluptuous dark-haired women pose with a snake and a Holstein cow. Several works feature vultures. Heagle's fluid draftsmanship and bright palette show the influence of Matisse, and her Dionysian tone is pure Dana Schutz, but her work's strongest affinity is with the bizarro realm of thrift-store paintings. Through Dec. 6. (I-20, at 557 W. 23rd St. 212-645-1100.)

HIROSHI SUGIMOTO

Sugimoto's seascapes—nearly abstract black-and-white photographs of water and sky—are among his most famous and familiar works, but the setting he's devised for them here is too dramatic to miss. Titled "Seven Days/Seven Nights," the show is not exactly unpretentious, but it's quiet, meditative, and, if you're in the right mood, even sublime. The seven daytime images are shown under a skylight; the seven nights are spotlit in a dark room. The latter group—rich, subtle studies in black on black—recalls Rothko, Reinhardt, and others who have probed the power of the void. Through Dec. 20. (Gagosian, 522 W. 21st St. 212-741-1717.)

STEPHEN WESTFALL

Like many painters who moonlight as art critics, Westfall is a nostalgic stylist. Hard-edged abstractions—stripes and grids in chipper colors—pledge allegiance to aesthetic principles that were lately passé when he arrived on the scene. (He was born in 1953.) Deep erudition haunts formats that dream of Mondrian, Agnes Martin, and other paladins of passionate, high-modernist rigor. Westfall retools classically heraldic effects with mild wit (grids jiggling off register, hints of commercial signage) at modest scale (big ideas become carry-on luggage). His is an art in love with the love of art, inviting viewers into an intimate circle of enraptured sophistication. Through Dec. 20. (Lennon, Weinberg, 514 W. 25th St. 212-941-0012.)



The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's newly opened New York City annex has memorabilia from some of music's biggest stars.

RUTH GWILY

Short List

TOMMA ABTS: Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070. Through Dec. 23. **ANNE CHU:** 303 Gallery, 547 W. 21st St. 212-255-1121. Through Dec. 20. **RICHARD DUPONT:** Nitsch, 534 W. 22nd St. 212-645-2030. Through Jan. 31. **DANA HOEY:** Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through Dec. 20. **PAUL P.:** Reich, 537A W. 23rd St. 212-924-4949. Through Jan. 10. **KAY ROSEN:** Gray, 526 W. 26th St. 212-399-2636. Through Jan. 10; Lambert, 550 W. 21st St. 212-242-3611. Through Jan. 3. **CINDY SHERMAN:** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100. Through Dec. 23. **JACKIE WINSOR:** Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through Nov. 29. **"FUNNY NOT FUNNY":** Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-929-5959. Through Jan. 17. **"LOOKING BACK":** White Columns, 320 W. 13th St. 212-924-4212. Through Dec. 13. **"THE WORLD IS ALL THAT IS THE CASE":** Hudson Franklin, 508 W. 26th St. 212-741-1189. Through Dec. 20.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ERNST CARAMELLE

The Austrian artist pulls off a trifecta of geometric abstraction, in works that are small and conceptual (sunlight on paper), medium-sized and conventional (pigment on wood), and extra-large and site-specific (a bright-orange, zigzagging mural). The latter transforms the white wall it encircles into a Pop-comic speech bubble awaiting its "Bang!," but the show's quiet high point is the group of nine drawings made by exposing areas of colored construction paper to sunlight for years at a time. Violet leeches to sand; magenta cycles through fuchsia, salmon, pale peach, and, finally, tan. The crazy-quilt patterns are cameraless snapshots—portraits of time fading away. Through Dec. 23. (Williams, 313 W. 4th St. 212-229-2757.)

CAROL RAMA

The nonagenarian self-taught artist, a cult figure in her native Italy, gets some overdue respect in this well-curated survey. The earliest work is a 1943 pastel-and-watercolor image of a full-figured nude, titled "Dorina." Collages from later decades echo the slash-and-burn tactics of fifties Italian painting and the rough materialism of sixties Arte Povera. Flattened inner tubes are splayed across canvases; spray paint and glue cake and pool like residue. Fortunately, age has not tamed Rama's approach: the most recent works here are in nail polish on tar paper. Through Dec. 20. (Maccarone, 630 Greenwich St. 212-431-4977.)

Short List

AUGUSTO ARBIZO: Envoy, 131 Chrystie St. 212-226-4555. Through Dec. 14. **COREY ARCANGEL:** Team, 83 Grand St. 212-279-9219. Through Dec. 20. **JOSÉ LEÓN CERRILLO:** Dispatch, 127 Henry St. 212-227-2783. Through Jan. 31. **JASON ESKENAZI:** Leica, 670 Broadway, at Bond St. 212-777-3051. Through Jan. 10. **CLIFFORD OWENS:** On Stellar Rays, 133 Orchard St. 212-598-3012. Through Dec. 14. **LORNA SIMPSON:** Salon 94 Freemans, 1 Freeman Alley. 212-529-7400. Through Dec. 13.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

The time for sugarplums and dancing snowflakes has arrived. For the next five weeks, the newly rechristened David H. Koch Theatre (formerly the New York State Theatre) will be filled with children, many of them attending the ballet for the first time. Balanchine's "Nutcracker," from 1954, is itself populated with scores of precocious young people, including, of course, little Marie and her brave Nutcracker prince. There's also plenty of scintillating dancing, as well as Tchaikovsky's wonderfully imaginative score. And, as always, "The Nutcracker" is an opportunity for the company's younger dancers to try their hand at the many featured solos, from the sultry Arabian Coffee to the luminous Dewdrop. (Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Nov. 28 at 8, Nov. 29 at 2 and 8, Nov. 30 at 1 and 6, and Dec. 2 at 6. Through Jan. 3.)

CIRQUE MECHANICS / "BIRDHOUSE FACTORY"

Chris Lashua's industrial-age fable showcases a rich panoply of acrobatics, breathtaking contortions, movement simulating machine works, and impressive aerial tricks. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Nov. 25 at 7, Nov. 26 at 2, Nov. 28-29 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 30 at noon and 5. Through Dec. 14.)

COMPLEXIONS CONTEMPORARY BALLET

Desmond Richardson and Dwight Rhoden's sexy, stylish troupe presents three premières by Rhoden, including "Rise," whose busy choreography is anchored by the steady beat of ten of U2's greatest hits, and "I Will Not Be Broken," in which Richardson channels his virtuosity into a survivor

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BAD SANTA

Preston Sturges's second film as a director, "Christmas in July" (1940), screening Nov. 26 at Walter Reade, is a vertiginous rags-to-riches story. When some office mates play a practical joke on a clerk with big ideas (Dick Powell), he thinks

Christmas IN JULY

he's won an advertising-slogan contest that pays twenty-five thousand dollars. He and his girl, played by Ellen Drew, buy gifts for their entire New York neighborhood. When the merchants in their spats arrive, determined to take the goods back, they get pelted with fish, ice cream, and other comestibles. It's a sweet little fable with a Depression-era mentality lurking beneath the humor: either you have everything or nothing, resplendent wealth or impoverished hopelessness. The satire is a little crude, but the bitterness is real. Powell and Drew are lovely together, and Sturges's stock company is in place, including Raymond Walburn, as a tantrum-prone C.E.O., and William Demarest, of the ferocious glare, as the contest's chief judge.

—*David Denby*

dance on a bench. To these the second week's program adds "Fall," Richardson's first stab at choreography, to a score of his own devising, and the pas de deux from William Forsythe's "Herman Schmerman." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 25-26 at 7:30, Nov. 28 at 8, Nov. 29 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 30 at 2 and 7:30.)

"THE ONLY TRIBE"
Masks by the sculptor Roland Gebhardt—flat, geometric pieces of foamboard, pierced like punch cards—are the basis of this dance-theatre piece choreographed by Peter Kyle. Six dancers, wearing the masks in order to animate an allegory of the destructive impact of colonization, perform a series of rituals to a propulsive, wildly genre-mixing score by Stephen Barber that pledges allegiance to no single tribe. (3LD Art & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-352-3101. Nov. 28-29 at 8 and Nov. 30 at 3. Through Dec. 20.)

LEWIS FOREVER
In "Freak the Room," three members of the Lewis family quartet play versions of themselves, while the place of the missing sister is taken by a be-wigged male impostor. Set in a living room painted in shades of gray, the piece presents a recognizable world made strange. One section resembles a homemade YouTube video gone wrong, and the power games played by the passive-aggressive impostor create an uncomfortably comic tone, which is the work's most noteworthy feature. (P.S. 122, First Ave. at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Nov. 30 at 6:30. Through Dec. 14.)

"DANCING FOR JERRY"
In one of the final installments of the yearlong celebration of the life of Jerome Robbins (who died ten years ago), the talented d'Amboise clan—Jacques, his daughter Charlotte, his son Christopher, and his son-in-law Terrence Mann—and a distinguished group of friends and associates will present an intimate evening of remembrances, archival footage, and, of course, song and dance. Performances include a little ballet for children by Jacques d'Amboise, set to Yiddish folk tunes that Robbins would have heard as a kid growing up in Weehawken. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Dec. 1 at 7:30.)

"URBAN TAP OPEN JAM"
The Kitchen once again gives up its stage to a tap jam, this one hosted by the French Guianese hoofer and world-music impresario Tamango. The informal event, free to the public and open to all comers, will start out with a global tilt, as Tamango brings in Pheeroan akLaff, the renowned Cameroonian bassist Francis Mbappe, and other friends from his years of cross-cultural jamming. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Dec. 1 at 8.)

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY
One of the few companies created by a modern-dance giant to have survived its founder's death, José Limón's troupe celebrates the centennial of his birth by honoring a contemporary whose legacy is less secure, Anna Sokolow. Her "Rooms," from 1955, is a classic urban-alienation dance, of its time in its jazz score and expressionist means and still as potent as ever. It should stand up well alongside a revival of Limón's "The Traitor," a Judas-and-Jesus tale made the year before, and redolent of McCarthy-era fears. To these, Clay Taliaferro, a company star in the seventies, adds a new piece, "Into My Heart's House." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Dec. 2 at 7:30. Through Dec. 7.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Daniel Barenboim, once the big man of Chicago, is taking New York by storm. With a piano-duo recital with James Levine behind him and a solo recital on the Metropolitan Opera stage yet to come (Dec. 14), he plunges into the main task of his Gotham residency, **"Tristan und Isolde"**—which happens to be his Met début. Barenboim's knowledge of Wagner is profound, though his conducting of it is ultimately governed by his own, usually intense impulses. He will lead a formidable cast: Katarina Dalayman, Michelle DeYoung (whose rendition of Brangäne last season was nothing short of revelatory), Peter Seiffert, and René Pape—whose ownership of the role of King Marke is unquestioned. (Nov. 28 and Dec. 2 at 7.) ♦ Interactivity comes to the Met with **"La Damnation de Faust,"** the thrilling, quasi-operatic oratorio by Berlioz. Robert Lepage's production superimposes fantastical video images (which fluctuate according to the singers' movements and voices) on a giant scaffold of a set; it also allows the cast (which includes a dexterous group of acrobats) to defy the strictures of space and gravity that would normally limit the visual potential of Goethe's diabolical tale. With mostly solid singing from Marcello Giordani, John Relyea, Susan Graham, and, of course, the Met chorus; the orchestra plays magnificently under James Levine. (Nov. 29 at 12:30.) ♦ Elijah Moshinsky's richly atmospheric production of Tchaikovsky's **"The Queen of Spades,"** with the estimable Maria Guleghina, Felicity Palmer, and Ben Heppner featured in the cast; J. David Jackson. (Nov. 29 at 8:30.) ♦ A new conductor—Lothar Koenigs, the music director-designate of the Welsh National Opera—brings **"Don Giovanni"** back to the repertory; the cast features not only the magnetic Erwin Schrott in the title role but also Tamar Iveri, Matthew Polenzani, and Ildebrando D'Arcangelo. (Dec. 1 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Julia Fischer, a young German violinist who has rapidly progressed from a teen-age prodigy to a stalwart of the concert scene, joins Lorin Maazel for the orchestra's Thanksgiving-week concerts, a platter of Bach (the Brandenburg Concerto No. 1), Mozart (the Violin Concerto No. 5, "Turkish"), and Schumann (the impassioned Fourth Symphony). (Nov. 25 at 7:30 and Nov. 28-29 at 8.) ♦ In a Saturday-matinée concert, the Schumann symphony will be replaced by a chamber performance by members of the Philharmonic's string section of Brahms's String Sextet No. 1 in B-Flat Major, which will begin the program. (Nov. 29 at 2.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

NEW YORK YOUTH SYMPHONY
The city's exceptional youth orchestra and its gifted young conductor, Ryan McAdams, offer a concert in which one of the winners of their young-composer commission competition (Ryan Gallagher) shares the limelight with Beethoven, Mozart (the Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, with Haochen Zhang), and Mussorgsky ("Pictures at an Exhibition"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 30 at 2.)

RECITALS

MUSIC BY GARA GARAYEV
Garayev, considered to be the most prominent Azerbaijani composer of the Soviet era (and a protégé of Shostakovich), receives a tribute concert at Zankel Hall featuring a mixture of local and foreign musicians (including the violinist Nurit Pacht). The program includes not only songs and chamber music but also Garayev's Third Symphony (with the Manhattan Symfonia Chamber Players). (212-247-7800. Nov. 28 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
As other musicians digest their turkey, the floating chamber-music series soldiers on. Nov. 28 at 8: In the latest installment of the barge's "Here and Now" programs of (mostly) American contemporary music, the Electrum Duo—the flutist Sophia Anastasia and the percussionist Ralph

EVERETT COLLECTION

Sorrentino—offers performances of works by Ingolf Dahl, Toru Takemitsu ("Toward the Sea"), Barbara Kolb ("Homage to Keith Jarrett and Gary Burton"), Astor Piazzolla, and others. ♦ Nov. 29 at 8: Tradition returns via the Williams Chamber Players, two of whom (the violinist Joanna Kurkowicz and the pianist Doris Stevenson) perform all three of Brahms's sonatas for violin and piano. ♦ Nov. 30 at 4: A top local freelancer, the violist Beth Guterman, joins members of the Israel Chamber Project in a concert that features Mozart's Trio for Clarinet, Viola, and Piano ("Kegelstatt") and Bartók's "Contrasts." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

WASHINGTON SQUARE CONTEMPORARY MUSIC SOCIETY
The admired Avalon String Quartet is the main draw for the Society's latest concert, an evening (also featuring the flutists Patricia Spencer and Tara Helen O'Connor) that will offer the New York première of the gifted neo-Romantic composer Daniel Godfrey's "Scrimshaw," along with works by Mario Davidovsky, Salvatore Sciarrino, and Henri Dutilleux ("Ainsi la Nuit," the best French quartet after Ravel), among others. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Dec. 1 at 8.)

WAYNE SHORTER 75TH-BIRTHDAY CONCERT
The jazz-saxophone master comes to a fitting venue, Carnegie Hall, to mark a major milestone. In addition to working with his Wayne Shorter Quartet, he will collaborate with the appealing Imani Winds in the New York première of "Terra Incognita," his first-ever classical commission. (212-247-7800. Dec. 2 at 8.)

"GUITAR PLUS" SERIES: CAVATINA DUO
Few musicians plow the furrow of the flute-and-guitar duo, but this pair is generally considered to be the best of them. They come to Engelman Recital Hall to perform works by, among other composers, Astor Piazzolla, Clarice Assad, and David Leisner. (Baruch College Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave. For more information, go to www.baruch.cuny.edu/bpac. Dec. 2 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

ANTARCTICA
A romantic comedy, directed by Yair Hochner, about a gay businessman in Tel Aviv and his search for love. In Hebrew. Opening Nov. 28. (Quad Cinema.)

AUSTRALIA
Baz Luhrmann directed this Second World War epic, about an English aristocrat (Nicole Kidman) and her employee (Hugh Jackman), who join forces to fight for control of her ranch and are besieged by the Japanese Army. Opening Nov. 26. (In wide release.)

FOUR CHRISTMASES
A romantic comedy, directed by Seth Gordon, about a married couple who must divide their Christmas celebrations among four households. Starring Reese Witherspoon, Vince Vaughn, Robert Duvall, and Sissy Spacek. Opening Nov. 26. (In wide release.)

MILK
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 26. (In limited release.)

TRANSPORTER 3
Jason Statham stars in this thriller, directed by Olivier Megaton, about an undercover agent who kidnaps a Ukrainian government official's daughter. Opening Nov. 26. (In wide release.)

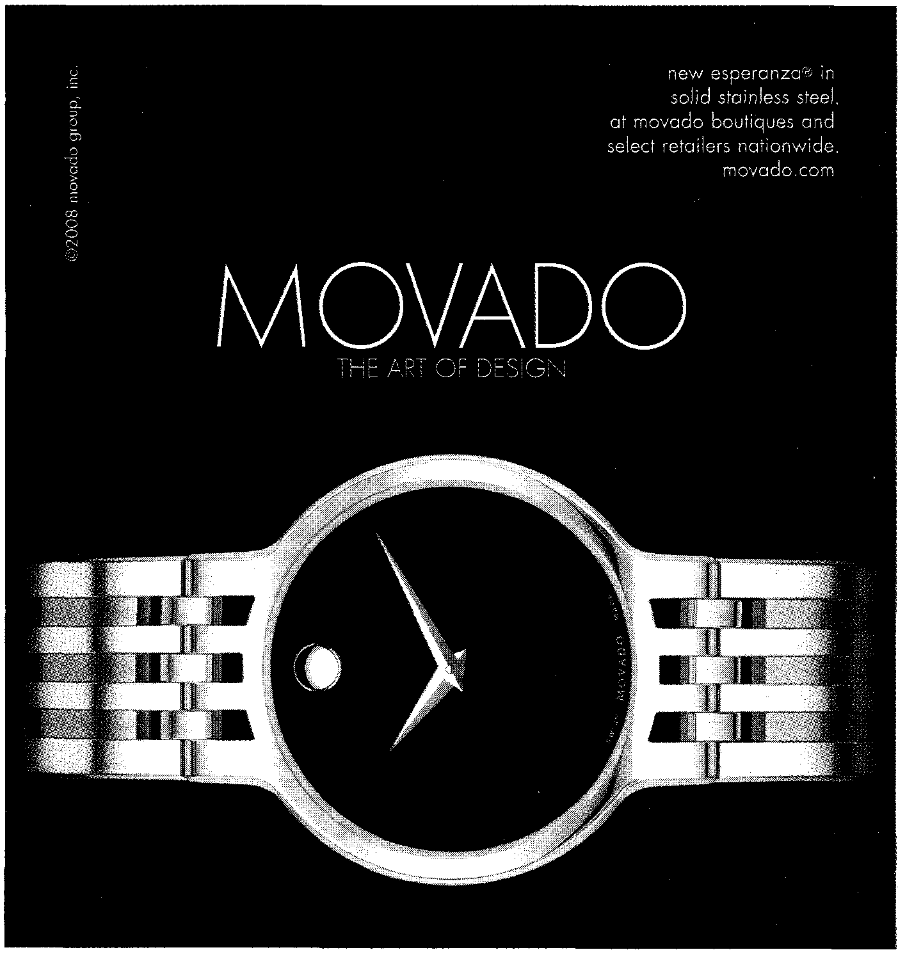
NOW PLAYING

A CHRISTMAS TALE
The new film from Arnaud Desplechin, best known here for "Kings and Queen" (2004), weighs in at exactly two and a half hours, yet it barely finds time to peer beyond the battlefield of a single family. We are swiftly introduced to Abel (Jean-Paul Roussillon) and Junon (Catherine Deneuve), who live in Roubaix, France—the director's home town. Junon is suffering from cancer, and both of them suffer from their children: the endlessly grieving Elizabeth (Anne Consigny), the frankly irredeemable Henri (Mathieu Amalric), and Ivan (Melvil Poupaud), who is holding steady, despite the fact that his wife loves somebody else. In an often disorienting mixture of rages, flashbacks, speeches to the camera, and nods to other movies, the story rolls and stammers along, drawing the family into a Christmas get-together but denying them more than a glimpse of the harmony that we might, by tradition, expect. Desplechin's film is hard, funny, and upsetting, and even at the end we feel that we are only just getting to know these people, though it could be argued that they scarcely know themselves. With Emmanuelle Devos, who laughs at the whole pack of them, and Chiara Mastroianni (Deneuve's real-life daughter). In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/24/08.) (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE FURY
Brian De Palma's visionary, science-fiction thriller is the reverse side of the coin of Spielberg's "Close Encounters." With Spielberg, what happens is so much better than you dared hope that you have to laugh; with De Palma, it's so much worse than you feared that you have to laugh. The script (John Farris's adaptation of his novel) is cheap gothic espionage occultism involving two superior beings—spiritual twins (Andrew Stevens and Amy Irving) who have met only telepathically. But the film is so visually compelling that a viewer seems to have entered a mythic night world; no Hitchcock thriller was ever so intense, went so far, or had so many "classic" sequences. With Kirk Douglas, Carrie Snodgress, John Cassavetes, Daryl Hannah, Dennis Franz, and Charles Durning. Released in 1978.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade; Nov. 30.)

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY
Poppy (Sally Hawkins), the single, thirty-year-old London schoolteacher in Mike Leigh's comedy, bounces on a trampoline after school, but she doesn't need much of a lift—she's already airborne. Is possession of the happiness gene enough to get you through life without harm? Or, putting it less grandly, can a woman as cheerful as Poppy serve as the protagonist of a full-length movie? Leigh, who directs with a carefree assurance (after much rehearsal with the actors), matches his heroine against a series of adversaries—an iron-willed flamenco dancer, a bully boy in her class, a driving instructor (Eddie Marsan) who is so rule-bound that he's choking with rage—all of whom try to overcome unhappiness by behaving as aggressively or living as rigidly as possible. The movie is not an argument for chaos; it's an argument for making one's way through life with a relaxed will and an open heart. With Alexis Zegerman as Poppy's dyspeptic roommate.—*David Denby* (10/13/08) (In wide release.)

HARVARD BEATS YALE 29–29
Sports may not always be a metaphor for life, but in Kevin Rafferty's refreshingly austere documentary, about a legendary 1968 college football game, it comes off as a surprisingly meaningful part of it. Yale's team was famous, Harvard's unheralded, but both were undefeated when they met in the season's final game, played in Cambridge, which proceeded according to expectations, until the last minute, when Yale blew a 29–13 lead. Rafferty intercuts the original television broadcast of the game (called by Don Gillis) with lively talking-head interviews with many of the game's now middle-aged participants—including Tommy Lee Jones, a Harvard guard and Al Gore's roommate; Ted Livingston, a Yale tackle, who had been George W. Bush's roommate; and Yale's quarterback Brian Dowling, nicknamed God and immortalized as B.D. in Garry Trudeau's



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"Doonesbury" comics. The story has a hero (Harvard's second-string quarterback, Frank Champi) and a villain (the Yale linebacker Mike Bouscaren), and the game's action, which is exciting on its own terms, connects with the personal and public passions of the day, from politics (Harvard's squad included a Vietnam vet and a member of the S.D.S.) to the sexual revolution (the men reminisce about the change in mores that resulted from the Pill). The result is a fascinating feat of cultural archeology.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum.)

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3: SENIOR YEAR
For the first time, the goings on at East High, that noted hotbed of voluptuous tension and intellectual clout, are visible on the big screen. Until now, the franchise has stayed within the bounds of the Disney Channel, and this third installment, directed by Kenny Ortega, cleaves to established guidelines. The young scholars still carry books around, for instance, in preference to reading them. Troy (Zac Efron) still loves Gabriella (Vanessa Hudgens) with a passion so unbridled that they are allowed to sit side by side on a hammock. He even invites her up into his tree house. But prom night beckons, as does the prospect of college, not to mention the end-of-year dramatic production: a chance for Chad (Corbin Bleu), Sharpay (Ashley Tisdale), Kelsi (Olesya Rulin), and the other regulars to parade their extravagant gifts. Though the plot feels weirdly scrappy and casual, there is a pleasing generosity to the way in which Ortega crams in as many songs as possible, often on the flimsiest of pretexts; if one tune slips from your memory before the next arrives, that's part of the deal. Much less forgettable is Ryan (Lucas Grabeel), the school choreographer, who dreams of Juilliard and dresses like a Nazi golfer.—*A.L.* (11/3/08) (In wide release.)

I'VE LOVED YOU SO LONG
As Juliette, Kristin Scott Thomas is first seen in closeup without makeup, her hair lustreless, her expression blank but tense. Juliette has completed a prison sentence of fifteen years for committing the unimaginable crime of murdering her six-year-old son. Her kid sister, Léa (Elsa Zylberstein), a literature professor at a university in Nancy, nervously lets her into her own family, where Juliette remains in an uneasy state of semi-silence. Written and directed by the novelist Philippe Claudel, the movie asks whether anyone who has done something so extreme can be welcomed back into the human community. And does she *want* to be welcomed back? Claudel is an observant man, he has commanded a large (and, to us, unfamiliar) cast of actors to gather around his star, and he dramatizes Juliette's slow reawakening with an infinite number of small, sharply etched details. The secrets that are finally revealed about the crime are unsatisfying—one feels a little cheated—but they have the curious effect of making one want to see the movie again in order to study Scott Thomas's performance. In French.—*D.D.* (11/10/08) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

LIBERTY HEIGHTS
The writer-director Barry Levinson's comedy-drama, from 1999, about growing up in middle-class Baltimore in the fifties, has something rare in American movies: a trenchant, lyrical nostalgia for the good-bad old days which deserves to be called Felliniesque. Both warm and gritty, filled with sentiment yet not sentimental, the movie follows the high-school senior Ben Kurtzman (Ben Foster) and his college-boy brother, Van (Adrien Brody), as they discover what it means to be Jewish—at least in a social sense. Ben declares war on a swimming club that posts a sign banning "Jews, Dogs and Coloreds." (Jews, Ben notes, are targeted first.) Van breaks the dating barrier between Semites and Gentiles, while their father, Nate (Joe Mantegna), runs a burlesque house and a numbers racket in a city where the racial equilibrium is wavering. The most original and compelling part of the movie depicts Ben's tender bond with a smart, fetching black classmate named Sylvia (Rebekah Johnson). Johnson and Foster do more than hold their own with the rest of the amazing cast (which also includes Bebe Neuwirth, as Nate's wife, and Orlando Jones, as a small-time drug dealer). The movie is in many ways a memory piece, but the actors imbue it with the venturesome fluidity of adolescent aspirations and emotions.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; Nov. 26 and Nov. 28.)

MR. & MRS. SMITH
Just as Alfred Hitchcock brings humor to his nightmare scenarios, his sole screwball comedy, from 1941, features an aspect of horror. The story reeks of sex, starting with the handsome Smiths, David (Robert Montgomery) and Ann (Carole Lombard), who are locked together in a wrecked bedroom for three days—but they're just solving a marital squabble according to their own set of rules. The sex seems to have gone out of their three-year marriage, but, when David learns that a legal loophole has rendered their union null and void, he becomes aroused by the prospect of seducing the former Miss Ann Krausheimer, who had been his wife. Instead, she puts him through the hell of renewed courtship. The latent erotic frenzy emerges in such diabolical details as the phallic neck of a champagne bottle that David points at his prey, and the childless Ann's new job at a department store's layette counter. David falls into a downward spiral of degradation as he watches Ann date his gallant, athletic law partner (Gene Raymond). All eventually comes out artificially well, but this comedy foreshadows the sexual gamesmanship of "Vertigo" as well as the metaphysical terror of "The Wrong Man" and "North by Northwest," in which a person is expelled from his life by a hiccup of fate.—*R.B.* (Film Forum; Nov. 30.)

NOT RECONCILED
The subtitle of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet's first feature, from 1965, "Only Violence Helps Where Violence Reigns," suggests the fierce political program evoked by their rigorous aesthetic. The pretext of the film, set in Cologne, is Heinrich Böll's novel "Billiards at Half Past Nine," which they strip down to a handful of stark events and film with a confrontational angularity that is akin to the Bartók music on the soundtrack. The subtlest of cues accompany the story's complex flashbacks. The middle-aged Robert Fähmel tells a young hotel bellhop of persecutions under the Third Reich; his elderly father, Heinrich, an architect famed for a local abbey, recalls the militarism of the First World War, when his wife, Johanna, incurred trouble for insulting the Kaiser. Heinrich's grandson is considering architecture, just as the exiled brother of Robert's late wife returns, only to be met by their former torturer, now a West German official taking part in a celebratory parade of war veterans. Straub and Huillet make the layers of history live in the present tense, which they judge severely. The tamped-down acting and the spare, tense visual rhetoric suggest a state of moral crisis as well as the response—as much in style as in substance—that it demands. In German.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade; Nov. 26.)

QUANTUM OF SOLACE
The twenty-second James Bond film is a strange affair. The hero is still hopping the globe in the quest to unravel a mysterious organization, as he used to do in the days of SMERSH. The difference, these days, is that none of it, not even the hopping, seems like fun. In the role of 007, Daniel Craig is brutish, joyless, and obsessive; you can't take your eyes off him, but you wonder whether the punishment that he metes out is really directed at himself. He doesn't eat, he drinks to kill pain, and he manages to spend half the movie in the company of the ravishing Camille (Olga Kurylenko) without getting anywhere near a bed. His official mission is to pursue Dominic Greene (Mathieu Amalric), who is—wait for it—fast becoming a leading figure in South American water-storage circles. But the real mission, nurtured in Bond's wounded heart, is to avenge the death of Vesper Lynd, who won his love in "Casino Royale." The director, Marc Forster, whips us from one savage set piece to the next, regardless of logical connection, and the result can be read as the toughest

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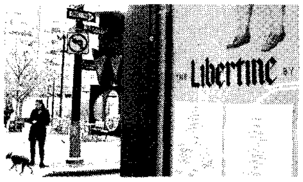
TABLES FOR TWO
LIBERTINE



HONORE BROWN

15 Gold St. (212-785-5950)—"The French, they say, live to eat," Martin Amis writes in "Money," his novel about the excesses of the nineteen-eighties. "The English, on the other hand, eat to die." New York adores the heart-clogging fare of the British pub, and, in the financial district, such stalwarts as Pound & Pence have long served up fish-and-chips and bangers-and-mash amid dartboards, billiard tables, and Boddingtons-fuelled sing-alongs. A few months ago, the celebrity chef Todd English brought to the neighborhood Libertine, an upper-class take on this working-class trademark. Lest the name fail to convey adequate profligacy, English established his restaurant on Gold Street, in a hotel called Gild Hall, and he christened a dining-room nook the C.E.O.'s Table. Out front, guests are greeted by depictions of a griffin, the mythological eagle-lion hybrid charged with guarding Scythia's gold. English (surname aside, he's a Georgia boy) revels in theatrics—a self-professed hair-gel junkie, he once made *People's* "Fifty Most Beautiful" list—and a few months ago he could be excused for thinking that all this was a marvellous idea. But what happens when there isn't any gold to guard?

Libertine can be a lonely place. The other night, a table of three was the rare bird among a covey of lone diners—reading, texting, staring out rain-soaked windows. Lucky, then, that pub food is fundamentally comfort food. Animal flesh abounds. In an otherwise excellent butternut-squash bisque, sweetbreads, tossed in like oyster crackers, risk filling you up prematurely. Ditto for the rest of the starters: mini, but not small, lobster rolls; Welsh rabbit beneath a mound of stout-steamed mussels; sliders, with fried oyster, mashed potato, and beef carpaccio stacked up like stones in a Gloucestershire cairn. Among the entrées, the size of the lamb potpie—whopping—only accentuates the fact that, even with a generous dash of harissa, the dish is a bland bowl of meat. The duck, beribboned with fat, arrives atop a curious mash of root vegetables (carrots, potatoes, parsnips) and beside a single stranded banger. Odds are you'll be flagging by meal's end, but no reputable libertine forgoes dessert. The excess of the "Cookies, Cakes, n' Pies"—a single item that consists of fried apple pie, a butter-toffee-macadamia cookie, a caramel cupcake, a white-chocolate-covered pretzel, a pecan-chocolate-chip cookie, chocolate-pudding pie, and homemade ice cream—rivals that of the check. As a character in Amis's novel puts it, "I tell you, man, you are out for a whole lot of money." (Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées $17-$27.)

—*Mike Peed*

and most expensive art-house film of the year. With Gemma Arterton, who lights up the action, all too briefly, as a fellow British spy.—*A.L.* (11/17/08) (In wide release.)

МУЗЕЙ БОЕВОЙ СЛАВЫ

Jason Eskenazi's photograph "Movie Set, Moscow, 1998," in his exhibition "Wonderland: A Fairytale of the Soviet Monolith," at Leica.

RACHEL GETTING MARRIED

The new Jonathan Demme film is one of his slighter and more oddball affairs. It stars Anne Hathaway as Kym, who leaves rehab—where she is being treated for drug addiction—to attend the wedding of her sister Rachel (Rosemarie DeWitt). This takes place at the family home in Connecticut, which has become, for the occasion, a multiethnic menagerie of liberal optimists, many bearing musical instruments. Not surprisingly, the festive air is spoiled by the intrusion of Kym, who feels constrained by her protective father (Bill Irwin) and then flashes into fearsome combat with her mother (Debra Winger). The movie is too long, and often wearying to watch, taking its visual cues from the unappeasable restlessness of the heroine. Yet the scene in which she is welcomed home, after a car accident, to be bathed and consoled by her sister without a word has a real, if exhausted, tenderness; the smarting emotions on show here are seldom contrived, and anyone versed in family conflict—that is, anyone with a family—will flinch at those moments when Demme cuts close to the bone.—*A.L.* (10/6/08) (In wide release.)

ROLE MODELS

Paul Rudd is mainly the straight man in this wan, sentimental, occasionally very funny comedy. He and Seann William Scott star as a pair of dead-end marketers shilling an energy drink to high-school students. His frustration and anger lead to a run-in with the law that gets them both sentenced to community service with a Big Brothers-like organization—and, not surprisingly, these immature adults ultimately learn to grow up by helping children in need. Most of the comedy comes from a stunning array of supporting comedians from the Judd Apatow stable (especially Christopher Mintz-Plasse, from "Superbad"), who are turned loose and allowed to riff freely, as well as from an outrageous child, Bobb'e J. Thompson, who never becomes cloying. Unfortunately, the humor repeatedly strikes the same few notes and is exhausted long before the warmhearted ending. Poor Elizabeth Banks, as a lawyer and beleaguered fiancée, once again plays a responsible mother surrogate; she and Rudd both need some hard-edged drama to expand their intelligent, lively personae. Directed by David Wain.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

SALLY OF THE SAWDUST

D. W. Griffith, the father of the cinema, was also a son of the theatre, and in this rowdy yet sweet-toned comic melodrama of carnival life, from 1925, he yoked the cinema's youth to the age-old lore of the wandering trouper. The wide-eyed, impulsive Carol Dempster stars in the title role as a circus orphan, the daughter of a Connecticut heiress who ran off with a showman and was disowned. Raised by one Professor McGargle (W. C. Fields, in his first starring role in a feature, before his shtick turned sour), an itinerant magician, juggler, pickpocket, and shell-game sharper with a heart of gold, Sally becomes his whimsical, resourceful, and fiercely devoted sidekick—and thinks she's his daughter. Griffith takes full advantage of his actors' aptitude for slapstick, combining the low humor of movie pioneers with a dramatic romance involving an upright gentleman (the stage star Alfred Lunt, in one of his few film appearances) who perceives, despite Sally's greasepaint and antics, her noble nature. Disturbingly realistic scenes of Sally and McGargle scuffling along train tracks for want of fare contrast with the near-metaphysical transfiguration of Sally into a grande dame for a salon entertainment. Griffith rarely displayed the scope of his genius as comprehensively or as generously. Silent.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Nov. 29.)

THE SILENCE BEFORE BACH

The Spanish director Pere Portabella's latest film brings Bach's music to life with a mysterious, inspired blend of drama, documentary, and quasi-surrealist whimsy. Beginning with a scene of a player piano rattling off the Goldberg Variations while rolling through a bright, bare loft, Portabella tickles the senses with a series of skits: a truck driver who plays Bach on the harmonica; Bach himself (the harpsichordist/organist Christian Brembeck) teaching his son Christoph Friedrich music via the "Well-Tempered Clavier"; a Bach impersonator hosting tourists in Leipzig; an orchestra of cellists playing a suite while speeding along in a sleek new subway car; and a bookseller who speaks to a customer of the horrific abuses of great music in Auschwitz. From puckish humor and borderline kitsch, a serious notion emerges: modern Europe was built on the foundation of classical music, which, as a result, endures tenaciously there. In Spanish and German.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Nov. 26.)

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

An eighteen-year-old Muslim tea-boy named Jamal (Dev Patel), born and raised in the poverty of Mumbai, teeters on the verge of fame and fortune. A nation awaits. Such is the old-fashioned, sentimental cliffhanger to which the screenwriter Simon Beaufoy and the director Danny Boyle have, with unembarrassed drive, committed themselves. Jamal is a contestant on the Indian edition of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?," and the suspicion of the police—who, in an ill-judged prelude to the story, hold and torture him—is that he must have cheated. His response is that experience alone, whether wretched or comic, has by chance furnished him with the correct answers, and the bulk of the film, constructed from flashbacks, proves his point. The style, seen previously in "City of God" and other movies, is what you might call urban-manic: heated performances, even hotter colors, and camerawork that vies with the editing for nerve and speed. The lad at the center of it all is actually on the dull side, but the energy around him—not least in the dance sequence over the final credits—is difficult to resist.—*A.L.* (11/24/08) (In wide release.)

SYNECDOCHE, NEW YORK

The screenwriter Charlie Kaufman, who was responsible for "Adaptation," "Being John Malkovich," and other enlivening puzzles, has now directed a film of his own. Philip Seymour Hoffman plays Caden Cotard, who starts off running a small theatre company in Schenectady, and, following a sumptuous grant from the MacArthur Foundation, ends up spending decades on an altogether grander project—constructing a chunk of alternative city within New York, in which countless characters go about their scripted lives. It is an amazing conceit, but that, unfortunately, is more or less what it remains: a conceit, which, having taken half the film to get moving, then grows increasingly hard to grasp as a practical enterprise, and even harder to believe in. Figures from Caden's world are represented, within his magnum opus, by hired actors: thus, his colleague Hazel (Samantha Morton), for whom he has an enduring affection, is played by Tammy (Emily Watson), and Caden himself by Sammy (Tom Noonan). As a reflection on the human eagerness to tell tales about ourselves, and to make good on our disappointments through art, Kaufman's movie has fine flashes of black humor, and there is no mistaking the tenderness in the performances of Morton, Watson, and, later on, Dianne Wiest; but the over-all result is a long slog, and the customary brightness of the writer's wit feels ever more clouded by the surrounding gloom. With Catherine Keener, as Caden's weary wife, and Hope Davis, as their counsellor.—*A.L.* (11/3/08) (In wide release.)

TOMORROW, THE WORLD!
This rousing, hectic wartime kitsch, from 1944, about a German teen-ager who arrives in a small American town and turns out to be a militant Nazi, is enlivened by sharp writing, sparkling performances, and a sense of heartfelt political urgency. Fredric March brings diffident charisma to the role of Mike Frame, a scientist engaged in top-secret military research. Mike's late sister had married his former professor from Leipzig, who died in a concentration camp and left a son, Emil (Skip Homeier). The widowed Mike—whose household includes his spunky teen-age daughter, Pat (Joan Carroll), his spinster sister, Jessie (Agnes Moorehead), and their German-immigrant maid, Frieda (Edit Angold)—welcomes his nephew into his home. But Emil quickly brings chaos, as he insults a Polish boy (Rudy Wissler), spies on Mike's research, sows terror in the classroom, and hurls anti-Semitic epithets at his teacher, Leona Richards (Betty Field), who also happens to be Mike's fiancée. As Emil's behavior turns bloody, the story pivots on the question of reconciliation—whether patriotic citizens of the Third Reich, once defeated, could ever be cured of their ideology. Though the outcome of this liberal morality play is never in doubt, the chilling details—including explicit references to the German death machine—convincingly convey the ambient tensions on the home front. Directed by Leslie Fenton.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade; Nov. 29.)

TROUBLE THE WATER
During Hurricane Katrina, a former drug dealer and would-be rapper named Kimberly Roberts, possessed of a new digital video camera, decided to stay in her New Orleans house with her husband and take some pictures. The footage, shot from the attic as the water creeps higher, is a chaotic but terrifyingly expressive struggle to record what's going on without dying, the ultimate in existential filmmaking: I shoot, therefore I am. The footage later fell into the hands of the filmmaking team of Carl Deal and Tia Lessin, who recorded Kimberly's return to the mud-carpeted, wrecked neighborhood, two weeks after the storm, and surrounded her story with testimony from survivors. In the end, "trampling over tribulations," as she puts it, Kimberly performs a rap song that reveals her earlier life—a kind of "Song of Myself" that feels fully justified as an anthem of endurance. This movie, along with Spike Lee's "When the Levees Broke," is one of the essential Katrina documents.—*D.D.* (9/15/08) (BAM; Dec. 2.)

TWILIGHT
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

ZACK AND MIRI MAKE A PORNO
It begins with church bells ringing in mournful disapproval of the filth that is about to be set before us. Kevin Smith, the eternally blasphemous boy from New Jersey, takes two of his going-nowhere-fast characters—Zack (Seth Rogen) and Miri (Elizabeth Banks), friends since high school and now roommates suffering through the chilly boredom of a Pittsburgh winter—and turns them into porn stars and producers. They assemble a ragtag cast and set to work, after hours, in a Starbucks-like café where Zack is a barista. Alas, the jokes are no more than occasionally funny. As a parodist, Smith doesn't have much room to maneuver. He can only make even sillier the kind of material that, at the plot level, is already hapless—the mailman at the housewife's door, the sudden urge to unzip, the simulated joy. In classic American fashion, the talk is dirtier than the sex. Through it all, Smith attempts to stage a tender love story—Rogen, bearded and then clean-shaven, looks at the lovely Banks like a beatific bull.—*D.D.* (11/10/08) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BOLT: In wide release. **THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PAJAMAS:** In wide release. **MADAGASCAR: ESCAPE 2 AFRICA:** In wide release. **SOUL MEN:** In wide release.

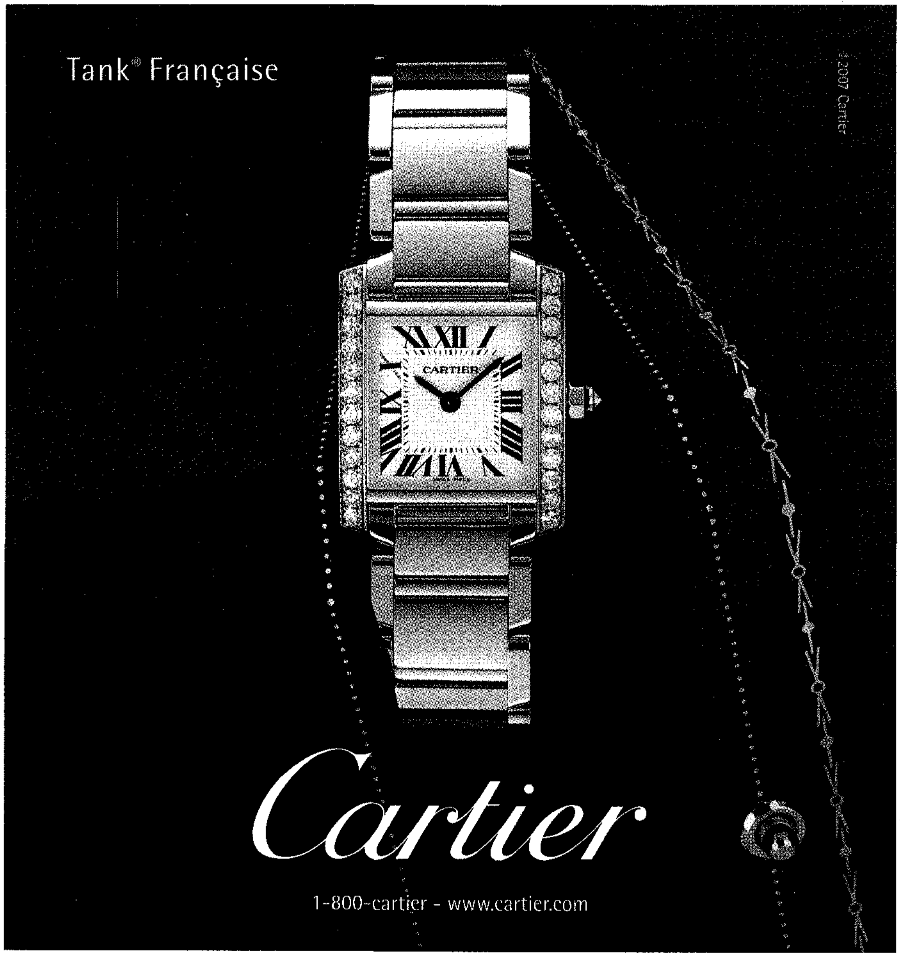
REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Essential Cinema." The films of Stan Brakhage. Nov. 28 at 7:30: "The Art of Vision" (1961-65). ♦ Nov. 29 at 6: Short films, including "Anticipation of the Night" (1958). ♦ Nov. 29 at 8: "Scenes from Under Childhood" (1969-70). ♦ Nov. 30 at 4:30: Short films, including "The Weir-Falcon Saga" (1970). ♦ Nov. 30 at 6:30: The Pittsburgh trilogy, including "Eyes" (1970). ♦ Nov. 30 at 8:30: "The Text of Light" (1974). ♦ Nov. 28-Dec. 10: The African Diaspora Film Festival. For program information, visit www.nyadff.org.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Punk 'n' Pie." Nov. 26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Jubilee" (1977, Derek Jarman). ♦ Nov. 27-28 at 2, 4:30, and 9:30: "Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten" (2007, Julien Temple). ♦ Nov. 29 at 2 and 6:50: "Urgh! A Music War" (1981, Derek Burbidge). ♦ Nov. 29 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Joy Division" (2007, Grant Gee). ♦ Nov. 30 at 2 and 6:50: "Depeche Mode 101" (1989, D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus). ♦ Nov. 30 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Sid and Nancy" (1986, Alex Cox). ♦ A tribute to Penélope Cruz. Dec. 1 at 4:30 and 7:30: "Volver" (2007, Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish). ♦ "Brooklyn Close-Up." Dec. 2 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Trouble the Water" (†).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Nov. 26-Dec. 2 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "City Lights" (1931, Charles Chaplin). ♦ Nov. 26-Dec. 2 at 2:45, 6:15, and 9:45: "Modern Times" (1936, Chaplin). ♦ The films of Carole Lombard. Nov. 26 at 1:10, 4:25, and 7:40: "We're Not Dressing" (1934, Norman Taurog). ♦ Nov. 26 at 2:45, 6, and 9:15: "Bolero" (1934, Wesley Ruggles). ♦ Nov. 27 at 1, 5:10, and 9:20: "Ladies' Man" (1931, Lothar Mendes). ♦ Nov. 27 at 2:25 and 6:35: "Man of the World" (1931, Richard Wallace). ♦ Nov. 27 at 3:50 and 8: "From Hell to Heaven" (1933, Erle C. Kenton). ♦ Nov. 28-29 at 1:15, 4:45, and 8:15: "Nothing Sacred" (1937, William Wellman). ♦ Nov. 28-29 at 2:55, 6:20, and 9:50: "To Be or Not to Be" (1942, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ Nov. 30 at 1, 4:20, and 7:40: "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" (†). ♦ Nov. 30 at 2:50, 6:10, and 9:30: "The Princess Comes Across" (1936, William K. Howard). ♦ Dec. 1 at 1, 5:15, and 9:30: "Up Pops the Devil" (1931, A. Edward Sutherland). ♦ Dec. 1 at 2:30 and 6:45: "Fast and Loose" (1930, Fred Newmeyer). ♦ Dec. 1 at 3:55 and 8:10: "It Pays to Advertise" (1931, Frank Tuttle). ♦ Dec.



2 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: “In Name Only” (1939, John Cromwell). ♦ Dec. 2 at 2:50, 6:30, and 10:10: “Made for Each Other” (1939, Cromwell).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—“Refracted Light: The Films of Quinto and Jean-Gabriel Albicocco.” Dec. 2 at 12:30, 4, and 7: “The Riviera—Today’s Eden” (1958, Agnès Varda; in French) and “The Girl with the Golden Eyes” (1961, Jean-Gabriel Albicocco; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Ingmar Bergman’s television series “Scenes from a Marriage” (1973; in Swedish). Nov. 28 at 11 A.M.: Parts 1 and 2. ♦ Nov. 29 at 11 A.M.: Parts 3 and 4. ♦ Nov. 30 at 11 A.M.: Parts 5 and 6. ♦ “Waverly Midnights.” Nov. 26-29: “Friday the 13th” (1980, Sean S. Cunningham).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—“Still Moving.” Nov. 26 and Nov. 28 at 1:30: “Liberty Heights” (†). ♦ “The Contenders.” Nov. 26 at 6: “The Silence Before Bach” (†). ♦ “Batiste Madalena and the Cinema of the 1920s.” Nov. 28 at 6 and Nov. 29 at 4:30: “Old Ironsides” (1926, James Cruze; silent). ♦ Nov. 28 at 8:30 and Nov. 30 at 4: “The Last Command” (1928, Josef von Sternberg; silent). ♦ Nov. 29 at 2: “Sally of the Sawdust” (†). ♦ Nov. 30 at 2: “Hotel Imperial” (1927, Mauritz Stiller; silent). ♦ A tribute to the director Melvin Van Peebles. Dec. 1 at 6:15: “Story of a 3-Day Pass” (1968; in French and English). ♦ Dec. 1 at 8: “Confessionsofa Ex-Doofus-ItchyFooted Mutha” (2008). Both screenings will be introduced by Van Peebles.

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—“Cabaret Cinema.” Nov. 28 at 9:30: “The Bow” (2005, Kim Ki-duk; in Korean).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—“Manny Farber: 1917-2008.” Nov. 26 at 2:30 and 6:30: “Christmas in July” (1940, Preston Sturges). ♦ Nov. 26 at 4:15: “I Was Born, But . . .” (1932, Yasujiro Ozu; silent). ♦ Nov. 26 at 8: “Not Reconciled” (†). ♦ “Problem Child: A Cinematic Display of Bad Behavior.” Nov. 28 at 12:30 and Nov. 29 at 9:30: “Mommie Dearest” (1981, Frank Perry). ♦ Nov. 28 at 3 and Nov. 30 at 8:30: “The Omen” (1976, Richard Donner). ♦ Nov. 28 at 5:10 and Nov. 30 at 1:30: “The Innocents” (1961, Jack Clayton). ♦ Nov. 28 at 7:10: “The Children’s Hour” (1961, William Wyler). ♦ Nov. 28 at 9:20: “The Exorcist” (1973, William Friedkin). ♦ Nov. 29 at 1:30: “The Bad Seed” (1956, Mervyn LeRoy). ♦ Nov. 29 at 4: “Tomorrow, the World!” (†). ♦ Nov. 29 at 5:45: “Compulsion” (1959, Richard Fleischer). ♦ Nov. 29 at 7:50: “Village of the Damned” (1960, Wolf Rilla). ♦ Nov. 30 at 3:30: “The Fury” (†). ♦ Nov. 30 at 6:15: “The Other” (1972, Robert Mulligan). ♦ In première. Dec. 1 at 7: “The Secret of the Grain” (2007, Abdellatif Kechiche; in Arabic, French, and Russian).

READINGS AND TALKS

KGB BAR
The poets Star Black and Daniel Nester read from their work. (85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary. Dec. 1 at 7:30.)

"POEMS & PINTS"
The Poetry Society of America and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s monthly reading series at Fraunces Tavern continues with Edward Field and Vijay Seshadri. (54 Pearl St. For more information, call 212-254-9628. Dec. 2 at 6:30.)

BARNES & NOBLE
Khaled Hosseini, the author of “The Kite Runner,” offers selections from his latest novel about life in Afghanistan, “A Thousand Splendid Suns.” (33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary. Dec. 2 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME ANNEX
The Cleveland-based museum of teen-age rebellion has opened a local branch, with a theatre, an interactive map of Manhattan pointing out significant places of musical history, and artifacts from the likes of Billy Joel (the notebook in which he wrote the lyrics for songs on his 1977 album, “The Stranger”), Bruce Springsteen (a 1957 Chevy that he once owned), and Madonna (her Jean Paul Gaultier bustier). Rotating exhibits will also be a part of the experience; the first one is devoted to the Clash. (76 Mercer St. 866-963-2569.)

WALK OFF THE TURKEY
Shorewalkers, a nonprofit advocacy group dedicated to step-by-step explorations of the city’s littoral zone, presents the opportunity to undo some of the caloric damage that Thanksgiving can inflict, with a hike of eleven miles or so along the Hudson, from South Ferry to the Little Red Lighthouse, beneath the George Washington Bridge. (Nov. 29, starting at 10 A.M. For more information, visit www.shorewalkers.org.)

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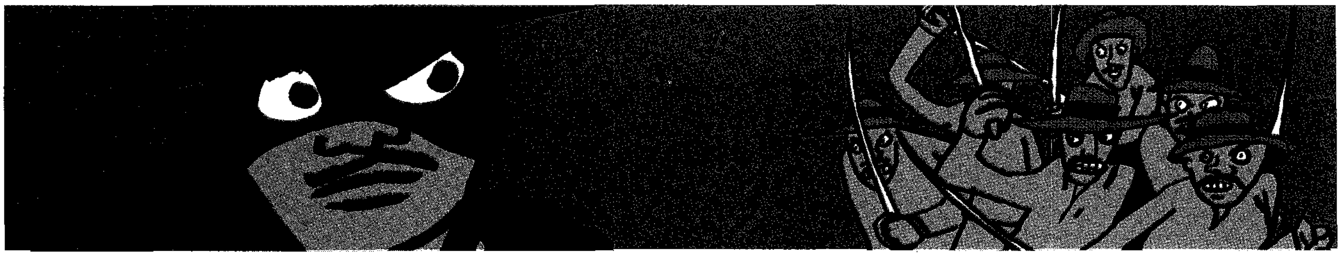
Visit the Goings On blog, at www.newyorker.com/go/goingson, for additional cultural coverage and commentary.



The films of Douglas Fairbanks, at MOMA.

MAXIMILIAN BODE

ON THE HORIZON

ART
DEEP COVER
Dec. 5-March 29

Judge a book by its cover at the Morgan Library & Museum’s upcoming exhibition “Protecting the Word: Bookbindings of the Morgan.” Some fifty examples will be on view—from the jewel-studded eighth-century covers of the Lindau Gospels to the gold-tooled goatskin cover of “Cirque,” an outsized book by André Suarès with aquatints by Georges Rouault, published in 1938. (212-685-0008.)

AUCTIONS
EVERMORE
Dec. 10

The upcoming literary sale at Bloomsbury, the British house, features at least one gem: a recently discovered manuscript with the earliest extant version of Edgar Allan Poe’s “Irene” (or “The Sleeper”). (www.bloomsburyauctions.com.)

MOVIES
CAPE AND JAPE
Dec. 17-Jan. 31

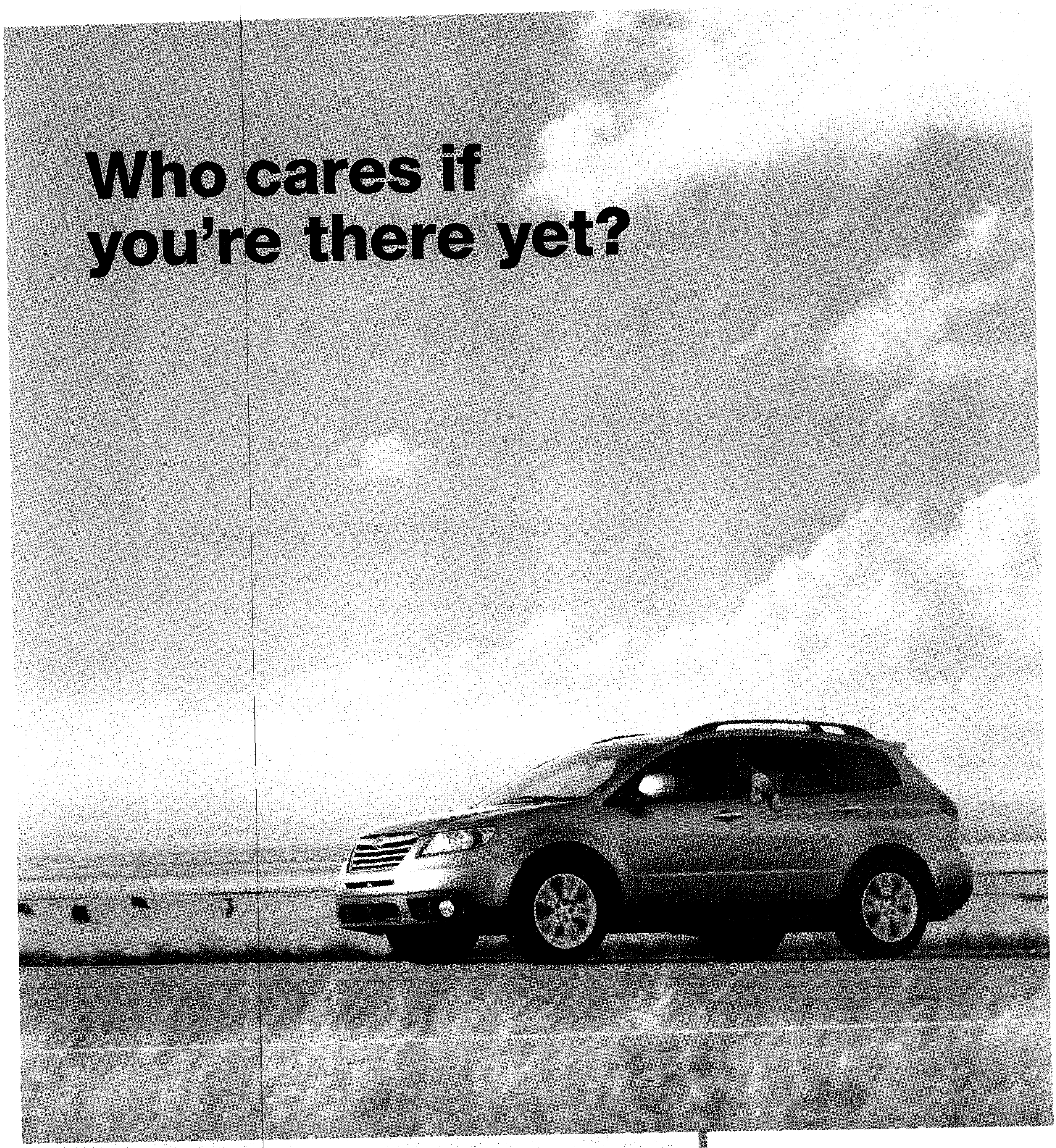
Douglas Fairbanks, the king of the swashbucklers, began his movie career with D. W. Griffith but soon found fame on his own, as a dashing romantic hero with a sunny smile. He also proved to be a visionary businessman, as a co-founder (with Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, and Mary Pickford) of United Artists. MOMA offers a batch of Fairbanks’s silent treasures, including “The Mark of Zorro,” from 1920. (212-708-9480.)

NIGHT LIFE
A VERY GOOD YEAR
Dec. 31

City Winery, the make-your-own wine emporium in SoHo and the brainchild of the impresario and Knitting Factory founder Michael Dorf, opens to the public on New Year’s Eve with a show by Joan Osborne. Regular sets of live music get under way a week later, with Steve Earle and Allison Moorer. (www.citywinery.com.)

THE THEATRE
CATSKILLS CULTURE
Jan. 2

Manhattan Theatre Club revives Richard Greenberg’s 1990 drama “The American Plan,” a Catskills love story set in the nineteen-sixties, starring Mercedes Ruehl and Lily Rabe. (212-239-6200.)



With the Tribeca, all the fun is in getting there. An available third row ensures plenty of seating, while the Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive gives you a firm grip on the road. And since it's a 2008 IIHS Top Safety Pick,* you get peace of mind as well. Family and the open road go together better than you thought. **Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.**

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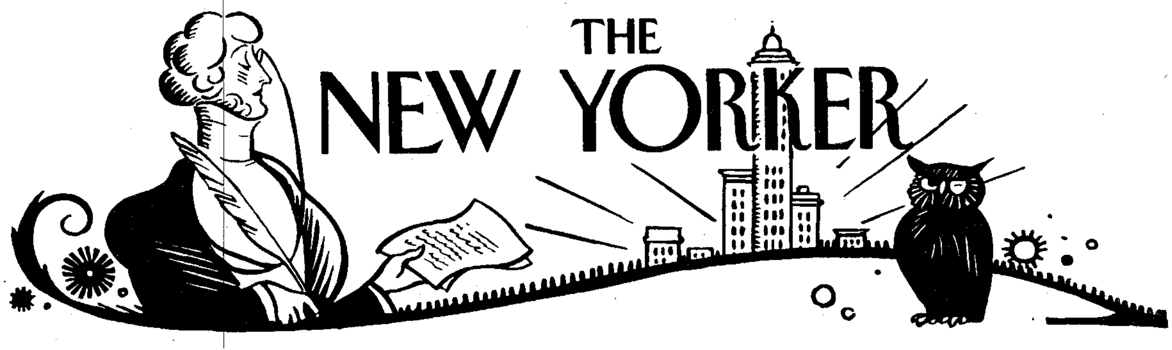
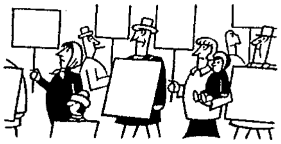


THE TALK OF THE TOWN

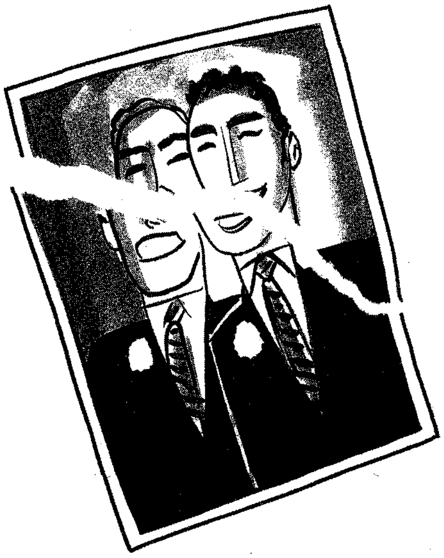
COMMENT
EIGHT IS ENOUGH



> Changes California Constitution to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry. Provides that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.
>
> —*Ballot summary, Proposition 8.*

You might think that an organization that for most of the first of its not yet two centuries of existence was the world's most notorious proponent of startlingly unconventional forms of wedded bliss would be a little reticent about issuing orders to the rest of humanity specifying exactly who should be legally entitled to marry whom. But no. The Mormon Church—as anyone can attest who has ever answered the doorbell to find a pair of polite, persistent, adolescent "elders" standing on the stoop, tracts in hand—does not count reticence among the cardinal virtues. Nor does its own history of matrimonial excess bring a blush to its cheek. The original Latter-day Saint, Joseph Smith, acquired at least twenty-eight and perhaps sixty wives, some of them in their early teens, before he was lynched, in 1844, at age thirty-eight. Brigham Young, Smith's immediate successor, was a bridegroom twenty times over, and *his* successors, along with much of the male Mormon élite, kept up the mass marrying until the nineteen-thirties—decades after the Church had officially disavowed polygamy, the price of Utah's admission to the Union, in 1896. As Richard and Joan Ostling write in "Mormon America: The Power and the Promise" (2007), "Smith and his successors in Utah managed American history's only wide-scale experiment in multiple wives, boldly challenging the nation's entrenched family structure and the morality of Western Judeo-Christian culture."

"MORMONS TIPPED SCALE IN BAN ON GAY MARRIAGE," the *Times* headlined the week after Election Day, reflecting the views of proponents and opponents alike. Six and a half million Californians voted for Proposition 8, and six million voted against it—a four-point margin, close enough for a single factor to make the difference. Almost all the early canvassers for the cause were Mormons, but the most important contributions were financial. The normal political pattern is for money to get raised in California and spent elsewhere. This time, Salt Lake City played the role of Hollywood, rural Utah was the new Silicon Valley, and California was cast as flyover country. Of the forty million dollars spent on behalf of Prop. 8, some twenty million came from members or organs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



Some conservative commentators, who didn't have much else to gloat about, dwelt lingeringly on what they evidently regarded as the upside of the huge, Obama-sparked African-American turnout. "It was the black vote that voted down gay marriage," Bill O'Reilly, of Fox News, insisted triumphantly—and, it turns out, wrongly. If exit polling is to be believed, seventy per cent of California's African-American voters did indeed vote yes on Prop. 8, as did upward of eighty per cent of Republicans, conservatives, white evangelicals, and weekly churchgoers. But the initiative would have passed, barely, even if not a single African-American had shown up at the polls.

Still, this was a fight that should have been won, and after the initial shock—which tempted a few gay and lesbian voices to blame blacks for what O'Reilly credited them with—California's gay activists and their straight allies, judging from their online postmortems, have begun to direct more criticism at themselves than at their opponents. They were complacent: early polls had shown Prop. 8 losing by double digits. Their television ads were timid and ineffective, focussing on worthy abstractions like equality and

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

fairness, while the other side's were powerfully emotional. (Also dishonest—they implied that gay marriage would threaten churches' tax exemptions, force church-affiliated adoption agencies to place children with gay couples, and oblige children to attend gay weddings—but that sort of thing was to be expected.) Barack Obama, like Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, had come out against Prop. 8, yet the No-on-8 forces let Obama's popularity be used against them: a mass mailing suggesting that the Democratic nominee was for it went essentially unanswered.

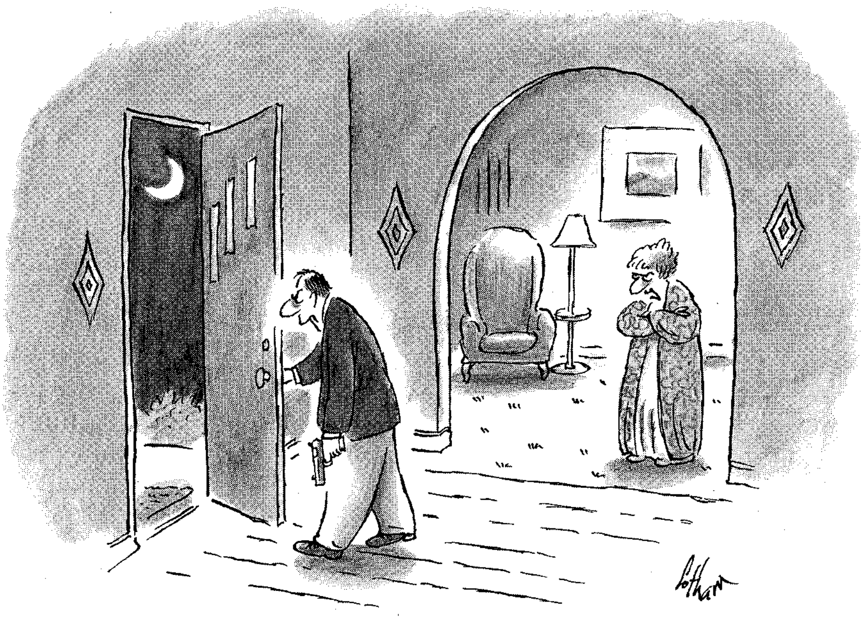
The defenders of equal access to marriage, in other words, think their problem was tactical—"messaging," not substance. They are probably right. In the days after the election, tens of thousands of people, gay and straight, took to the streets of cities and towns throughout the country in spontaneously organized protest. But the mood at these gatherings, by all accounts, was seldom angry; it was cheerful, determined, and hopeful. From 1998 to 2006, bans on same-sex marriage were put on the ballot in one state or another thirty times, and twenty-nine times the people voted for them. This year, in addition to California, Florida passed a ban; Arizona, which in 2006 had been the one exception, reversed itself and did the same; more cruelly, Arkansas approved a ballot measure depriving gay men and lesbians of the right to adopt children. But all this has about it the feel of a last stand.

Four years ago, Howard Dean's Presidential campaign worried that its undoing would be the fact that as governor of Vermont Dean had signed a bill allowing gays and lesbians to form civil unions; that turned out to be the least of his troubles. Now large majorities of Americans favor laws under which same-sex couples have all or most of the same rights as couples of opposite sexes, and five states, including California, have enacted them. Gay marriage itself is legal, and not terribly controversial, in Massachusetts and Connecticut. In 1993, most Americans thought that open homosexuals shouldn't be permitted to serve in the military; now three-quarters think that they should. And the polls show that the younger you are the more likely you are to favor equal treatment of gays and straights in every area of public and private life. The Field Poll, one of California's most respected, found last month that while the state's over-sixty-fives oppose gay marriage by a thirty-point margin, the under-thirty-fives favor it by thirteen points—and it's hard to think of a reason that getting older should change their minds.

Like a polluted swamp, anti-gay bigotry is likely to get thicker and more toxic as it dries up. Viciousness meets viscousness. "Look," Newt Gingrich, the former House Speaker, said the other day (on the air, to Bill O'Reilly), "I think there is a gay and secular fascism in this country that wants to impose its will on the rest of us, is prepared to use violence. . . . I think that it is a very dangerous threat to anybody who believes in traditional religion. And I think if you believe in historic Christianity, you have to confront the fact." For diversity's sake, he added that "the historic version of Islam" and "the historic version of Judaism" are likewise menaced—which is natural, given that gay, secular, fascist values are "the opposite of what you're taught in Sunday school."

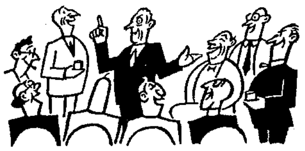
This sort of sludge may or may not prove to be of some slight utility in the 2012 Republican primaries, but it is, increasingly, history. A couple of days before the California vote, the San Francisco *Chronicle's* John Wildermuth noticed a "No on Prop 8" sign on a front lawn. The lawn and the sign belonged to Steve Young, the football Hall of Famer and former 49er quarterback, and his wife, Barb. Steve Young is a graduate of Brigham Young University, which is named for his great-great-great-grandfather. The Youngs still belong to the Mormon Church. "We believe all families matter and we do not believe in discrimination," Barb Young said. "Therefore, our family will vote against Prop 8." It wasn't enough this time. But the time is coming.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*



"What militia duty could you possibly be discharging at this hour?"

POSTMORTEM
DICIN' AND SLICIN'



The former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, who won eight states and more than four million votes in the Republican Presidential primaries, spent Election Night at home in Little Rock. Eating takeout in the den with his family and a few staffers, Huckabee wasn't surprised to see Barack Obama win, although he couldn't help but think that things might not have turned out the way they did had he been the nominee. "It would've been very different," he said the other day. "Because I would've campaigned that the economy was headed toward meltdown. And I was saying this back when I was getting laughed at by the *Wall Street Journal* and pilloried by

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WHAT

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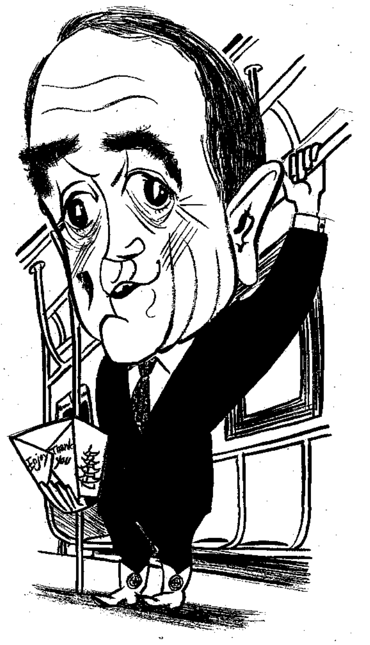
pgrade. And rebuild our national electricity grid.

’s time to get to work.

Repower America

the *National Review*. They were just dicin' and slicin' me for not following the company line."

Huckabee—tired-eyed but expansive, wearing a gold wristwatch, a suit and a tie (checked, with red and pink daisies), and kangaroo-skin cowboy boots embossed with the Arkansas state seal ("Regnat Populus," wheat sheaf, steamboat, beehive)—was speaking one morning last week in the library of the Cornell Club, where he was scheduled to give a lecture to the Hudson Union Society. He was in New York as part of a fifty-six-city tour to promote his seventh book, "Do the Right Thing: Inside the Movement That's Bringing Common Sense Back to America." (He also comes to town often to tape a show he has on Fox News—"I was on the D train a couple of weeks ago. I'd gone to church over at Times Square Church and I thought, Well, you know, there's a place in Chinatown that I absolutely love, Peking Duck House.") Huckabee, who lost more than a hundred pounds in 2004—that was his fourth book, "Quit Digging Your Grave with a Knife and Fork"—has a doofy sense of humor, but lately he has been deprecating others as much as himself, morphing from nice guy to Party meanie. In "Do the Right Thing," he takes a poke at Mitt Romney. "I never felt that he was levelling with the people," Huckabee said. "There was sort of a dismissive tone to the approach he took to me and several others."



Mike Huckabee

While some of Huckabee's gripes come off as rinky-dink—in the book, he admonishes Romney for hogging golf-cart parking spaces during the Iowa straw poll—others are more stinging. Asked about Sarah Palin, he responded, "She, uh, was an appropriate choice, because she put John McCain back in the game." That was the get-along answer, but a few minutes later the new, aggrieved Huckabee resurfaced. He recalled, "It was funny that all through the primary—I mean literally up until McCain got enough delegates to win—people said, 'You know, Huckabee's really running for Vice-President. Gee, Huckabee would be a great Vice-President.' And from that day forward, when I actually was no longer running for President, nobody ever said, 'Gee, Huckabee would be a great Vice-President.' " Neither was he quite so unperturbed by the Palin pick: "I was scratching my head, saying, 'Hey, wait a minute. She's wonderful, but the only difference was she looks better in stilettos than I do, and she has better hair.' It wasn't so much a gender issue, but it was like they suddenly decided that everything they disliked about me was O.K. . . . She was given a pass by some of the very people who said I wasn't prepared."

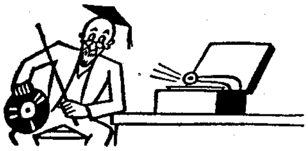
Huckabee went on to offer opinions on everything from Proposition 8 ("Even in the most decadent days of the Greek and Roman Empire, when same-sex relationships were pretty much considered O.K., the definition of marriage didn't change") to Beyoncé ("She's just one of the most amazing talents, both in terms of vocal style but also stage energy"), the pace of Manhattan ("I'm coming back from the studio, and it's midnight and there's people everywhere, and I'm thinking, Why are all these people out rolling around? *Why* don't they go home?"), prenups ("Horrible"), and Subway sandwiches ("The club on honey-oat bread. Mustard, no mayo. And the pepper-jack cheese"). McCain, Huckabee said, "had a tough current to swim against," but he might have saved his campaign by opposing the bailout for populist reasons: "Had he gone back to Washington and put a stake in the ground and said, 'By gosh, I'm not voting for this—I'll stand against it and fight it with everything in me,' I think he might have turned the election."

Of Obama's potential selection of Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, he said, "It's one of those things that if he's floating the balloon it better fly. . . . It would be twice having rung the doorbell and not taken her to the dance. You know, I'm sorry, but at some point you better get in the car with her and take her." With regard to the President-elect: "My guess is that Barack Obama will more disappoint his supporters on the far left than he will enrage his critics on the far right."

It wasn't that the fuzzy, affable Huckabee had vanished; there was just a little more mustard on his honey-oat bread. When people started asking about his prospects for 2012 just hours after the election, he said, it had been somewhat exasperating. He recalled, "I wanted to say, 'For gosh sake, just give it a rest, *please!*' "

—*Lauren Collins*

FATHER AND SON SWING SCIENCE



When Harold Varmus, the president of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, gives a lecture, he usually talks to a scientific audience about health, or government policy, or the discovery that won him a Nobel Prize (with J. Michael Bishop), in 1989—the proto-oncogene, which enhanced our understanding of cancer. But last week he filled the auditorium at the Guggenheim Museum two nights in a row for a presentation entitled "Genes & Jazz," in which he offered a primer on cell biology, evolution, and cancer, all to the accompaniment of a jazz quintet under the direction of his son Jacob, a thirty-five-year-old trumpeter and composer.

The program was part of a series called "Works & Process," which usually includes performances by musicians like John Zorn and Philip Glass. Mary Sharp Cronson, the series' producer, likes every so often to include a program with a scientific bent—once, a string quartet played music intended to evoke a black hole—and last year she approached Varmus, and Varmus approached his son.

"Biology was always Harold's territory," Jacob Varmus said. "It was a long,

long adjustment for him to accept what my path would be. For a long time, he still had designs on my having a career more like his."

"We both felt that there were unexplored similarities between jazz and science," Jacob said. "They both involve investigating patterns and structures and how things work. Science and jazz are also both fringe communities in this country, and so we figured we could tell a parallel story."

At first, they talked about working up a program on evolution—of species and of jazz—but that felt too didactic. "We decided we had to start with the simplest thing, the cell, and use music to try to express it. I was trying to use cell structure, like the double helix, to mirror that in the music."

Exactly how a composer could express the idea of cells dividing became the subject of some dispute between Varmus père and fils. "We had our ups and downs," Harold said. "Whenever I was in town on a weekend, I would ride my bike to Queens to have lunch with Jacob, and he would sit at the piano and I would talk. Jacob has a good layman's appreciation of science, but sometimes his understanding of the science didn't agree with mine, and that's where the father-son relationship began to break down. We had different interpretations of things."

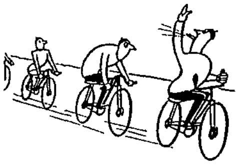
Then Harold came across some computer simulations of basic cell processes which had been produced by an Australian biomedical animator named Drew Barry. The animations, which are speeded-up renderings of cells dividing, are astonishingly beautiful. Harold decided to use them to illustrate his talk, and Jacob started thinking of his music as a kind of score. At the Guggenheim, the stage was arranged with a large screen in the middle, making it, in effect, a bridge between the two Varmuses. Science and music, father and son, were separated by the width of the auditorium.

Jacob Varmus's music is lyrical and self-assured, more Miles Davis than Dr. John. During the presentation, it was sometimes hard to tell that it was intended to evoke cell biology, but, then, the notion that a jazz composition might enhance your understanding of the way cancer cells divide is not really any more far-fetched than the idea that "Take the A Train" puts you in the right frame of mind for the subway. Harold Varmus seeded his lecture with musical metaphors. "Cells are like tiny orchestras, and they contain several instruments," he said. "Cells use their instruments to create the harmonies of life."

"I now understand the difference between giving a talk and doing a performance," Harold said the next day. "It's a whole new thing for me, these cues and lights and timing." He paused. "You know, later today I have to go to Washington to give a talk at a neuroscience meeting, and I actually wish I had some music."

—*Paul Goldberger*

HERE TO THERE DEPT.
WHEELING



It's possible for a New Yorker to go weeks without glimpsing a river or a harbor, and to lose track of the fact that Manhattan is both an island and a seaport. This misapprehension is inconceivable, however, for a user of the Waterfront Greenway, a well-marked thirty-two-mile route for walkers, runners, skaters, cyclists, and other non-motorized travellers. It follows the Hudson, Harlem, and East Rivers around Manhattan's perimeter, with occasional inland detours (across Dyckman Street, way up beyond the Cloisters; along the spine of central Harlem; around a couple of dozen blocks near the United Nations). The Greenway is especially well suited to bicyclists, who, if they are moderately fit and don't blow a tire on a broken apricot-brandy bottle, can cover the entire distance in a single leisurely morning or afternoon. Biking the Manhattan shoreline turns the city inside out, and gives the cyclist firsthand answers to questions that often stump even lifelong residents, such as: are there any decent places in Manhattan to go rock climbing, and what the heck do they keep under the Henry Hudson Parkway? Perhaps you yourself rode the Greenway on a recent, spectacular Friday afternoon, beginning and ending at the Battery, where, when you started, a man wearing a broad-brimmed hat was baiting a fishhook with a half-dollar-size crab, which he had selected from a joint-compound bucket at his feet. If so, here are a few of the other things you may have noticed along the way:

Helicopters and small airplanes flying above the Upper Bay like dragonflies above a swimming pool.

A man wearing a black wetsuit and an orange life jacket, bobbing in the Hudson about fifty feet from shore, using various hand tools to affix four large pink plastic petals to a rotting wooden piling. According to another man, who was standing onshore and holding a walkie-talkie, the man in the water was "installing prototypes for an art project, to see how they make it through the winter."

The Parthenon-like and perhaps spectacularly luxurious colonnaded rooftop outdoor lounging facility of Larry Flynt's Hustler Club, at Fifty-first and Twelfth.

A guy who had been shooting hoops alone on a court underneath the West Side Highway asking another guy, who had been shooting hoops alone on a different court, two courts away, for a little help in retrieving his ball, which had become stuck between the rim and the backboard, and then also asking, "Wanna play?," and then the two of them continuing to shoot hoops alone but now on courts adjacent to each other.

A man in bluejeans travelling south on a bright-yellow pedicab piled high with driftwood, which presumably he had collected along the river's edge, steering with his right hand and using his left hand to give his left leg a downstroke power assist; and a middle-aged nun in a white habit, veil flapping, riding a regular bike in the opposite direction.

A lost or discarded parking ticket undulating like a miniature magic carpet in the tiny waves a few feet from shore.

A guy fishing with an enormous surf-casting rod a little downstream from the George Washington Bridge and around a bend from the Jeffrey's Hook Lighthouse, which was saved from demolition in 1951 by outraged readers of the children's book "The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge," by Hildegarde H. Swift and Lynd Ward.

Several hundred pigeons loitering near the center of an otherwise unoccupied playing field, and, on the other side of the bike path, a man in running clothes sticking out his lower lip while doing rapid, shallow pushups on a bench.

A trailer, carrying rowing shells, parked near the magnificent gate of the Peter Jay

Sharp Boathouse, in Swindler Cove Park, on the Harlem River.

The turreted, thirty-room 1887 mansion of James Anthony Bailey, who was the co-founder, with P. T. Barnum, of "The Greatest Show on Earth." The mansion, which is at the northeast corner of 150th Street and St. Nicholas Place and is made of limestone, inspired Chester Wickwire, who may or may not have invented the woven-wire window screen, to build an almost identical mansion in Cortland, New York, in 1890.

Four old guys watching four other old guys eating slices of pizza at a white plastic card table on the sidewalk at 120th and First.

More bollards, cleats, capstans, hoists, and other riverside mooring paraphernalia—some of it freshly painted—than you would think could possibly have an ongoing nautical application in New York City.

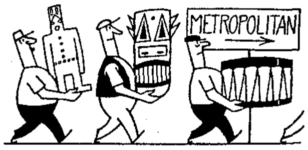
A young man transporting a set of golf clubs—which he had stuffed vertically into his bicycle's saddlebags—toward Stuyvesant Town.

Three young women from a country where the shoes don't look like ours, on a walkway above what may be the only sandy beach in Manhattan (under the western end of the Brooklyn Bridge), heading north from the South Street Seaport area, on their way to their next big adventure.

—*David Owen*

AT THE MUSEUMS

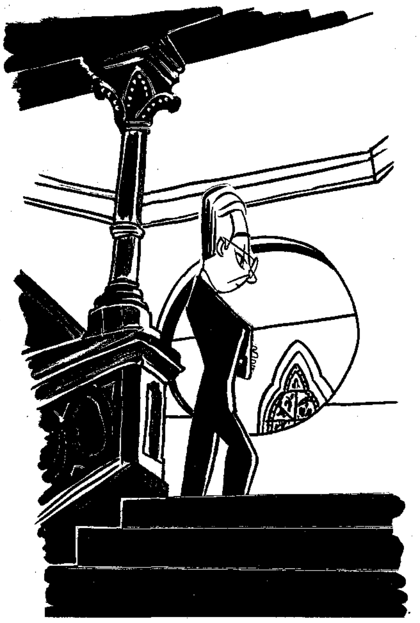
FOUR EYES



One day in 1995, a few years after joining the Design Department of the Metropolitan Museum, Daniel Kershaw was standing in a stairwell off the Tapestry Hall when he noticed a strange protrusion in the wall.

"It was a slight circular bulge, with the beginning of a crack," Kershaw said the other day. At the time of the discovery, Kershaw and some colleagues were restoring the stairwell's cast-iron railing, following an 1874 drawing by the museum's first architect, Calvert Vaux, and his collaborator Jacob Wrey Mould. After consulting the few surviving Vaux and Mould drawings, Kershaw speculated that something interesting might be hidden behind the bulge—namely, an oculus.

An oculus (the Latin word for "eye") is a round opening, often at the top of a dome but sometimes set into a wall or a landing. Vaux's building, a barnlike red brick structure in the High Victorian Gothic style, which today forms the centermost section of the museum, had included an oculus on the middle landing of each of four stairwells. There was no doubt that one pair of oculi had been destroyed, but Kershaw had hopes for the other two: "I would tell people, 'One day, I'm going to get in there.' " Earlier this year, when the museum renovated the Tapestry Hall, he did. In March, Kershaw and a team of workmen chopped through thick layers of plaster with small chipping drills, revealing the outlines of the oculi. The openings had been filled in with brick, and a few electrical wires ran through them. The team carefully removed each brick by hand.



Last week, a new gallery devoted to the art of the High Middle Ages opened in the renovated space behind the Grand Staircase. High up on one wall, seventy feet apart, were two round openings, each six feet in diameter. Standing in the space a few weeks earlier, Kershaw had pulled out some of Vaux's old plans for the building from the eighteen-seventies. It was almost unrecognizable: a center hall was separated from the side vestibules only by columns, and the interior was encrusted with Victorian ornament. One drawing, showing an elaborate molding around each oculus, made Kershaw laugh. "It's so fussy!" he said. "But this didn't make it into the final design. Maybe someone talked Vaux out of it, or maybe he came to his senses."

The architectural history of the Met spans more than one century, twelve firms, five master plans, and seventeen wings, but if there is a dominant theme it is this: bringing Calvert Vaux to his senses. Vaux had won the commission based on his standing as one of the masterminds of Central Park, but his initial museum building was declared, by its irascible president, "a mistake."

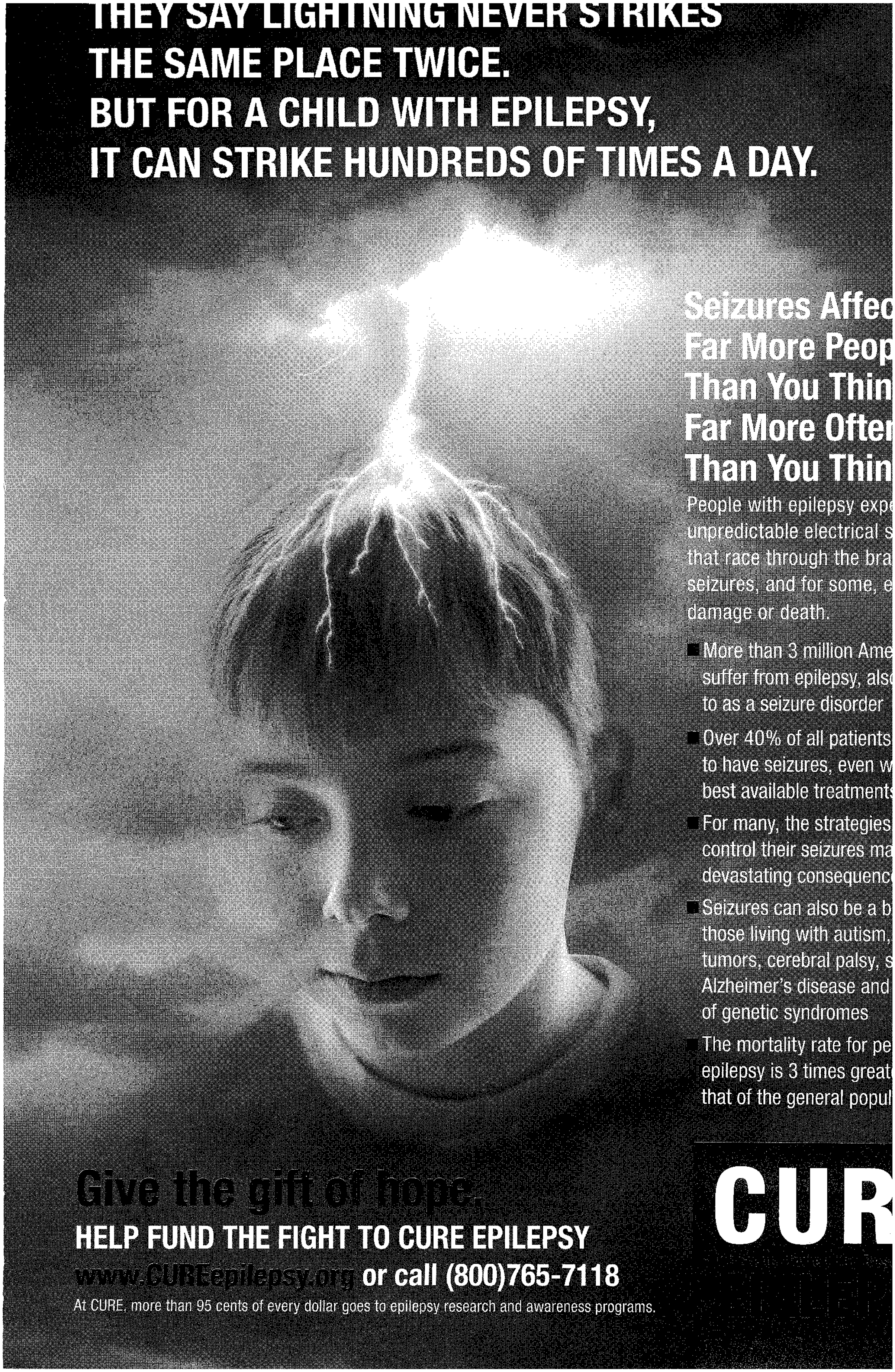
"Vaux was off the job almost as soon as it opened," Morrison Heckscher, the museum's resident expert on its architectural past, said. Vaux's master plan was too ambitious and costly, and Victorian design was slipping out of fashion. By the end of the century, new architects had begun executing a plan to completely surround Vaux's exterior with other structures; by the nineteen-fifties, the interior decorations had been stripped. "Basically, they came up with brilliant ways to make a building disappear," Heckscher said.

Initially, at least, Vaux's oculi were appreciated. In 1880, the *Times* reported, "The circular windows, which are at the intermediate landings, are so alluring, giving such pleasant glimpses of the rooms, that one must fain linger for a moment to look within, and an unconscious rest is gained."

Heckscher said, "Vaux wanted transparency, a concept that is very appealing to us in the art world today." He went on, "When you looked through the oculus, you looked out over a sea of glass cases. It was like going into Wanamaker's or Macy's. It was a way of showing off the goods."

The bird's-eye view of the new gallery will be similarly dramatic: the tapestries have been moved to another room, and a peek through one of the oculi from the stairwell now reveals a splendid crucifix and a burst of colorful stained glass. The oculi have been altered in one important detail: what were once open airways now hold panes of glass. These, Kershaw explained, were a necessary precaution. "We suspect that moderns might not be as well behaved as their historical counterparts."

—*Macy Halford*



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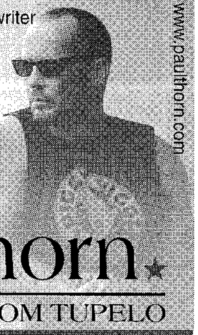

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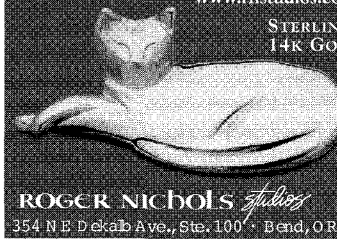

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PERSONAL HISTORY

FAMILY MATTERS

When science clashes with ancestral lore.

BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

My father's father, Edward St. Lawrence Gates—known to his children and his grandchildren as Pop—had two hobbies. He was renowned for one of them in and around his home town of Cumberland, Maryland: he grew tulips, "like a Dutchman," people said. He looked like a Dutchman, too—"light and bright and damned near white," as my father used to say. I learned about my grandfather's second hobby only after his death, in 1960, when he was eighty-one and I was nine.

Pop Gates was buried at the Rose Hill Cemetery, where our forebears were among the very few Negroes allowed to disturb the eternal sleep of Cumberland's élite white Episcopal citizenry. The town's Episcopal churches had been segregated at least since the black St. Philips offered its first Communion, on June 19, 1910. That day, the church's records show, Pop, his mother, Maud, his wife, Gertrude Helen Redman, and about half a dozen other Gateses took the Sacrament, which was offered by the Diocese of Maryland's white bishop.

I was struck by how different Rose Hill was from Thorn Rose, the all-colored cemetery in Keyser, West Virginia, where my mother's relatives had been buried. The effect was one of unkempt, chaotic modesty, each plot separately maintained by the family of the deceased. The dead at Rose Hill, by contrast, looked almost prosperous, their graves immaculate, some even regnant, crowned with ornate granite memorials. Rose Hill had a full-time groundskeeper and a stone-clad gatehouse, where records of the dead were kept. It was locked at night, unlike Thorn Rose, where just about everyone went to make out. At Thorn Rose, records of the dead seemed to exist only in the collective memory of the families whose ancestors were buried there.

My brother and I had been made keenly aware, early in our childhood, that the Gateses had a certain status in Cumberland. No one ever explained whether this was because they had owned property for a very long time in what is still a mostly white neighborhood, or because of light-skin privilege, or some combination of both. Being a Gates was somehow special, and not just within the black community in Cumberland.

After Pop's burial, my father took us back to the Gates family home, at 505 Greene Street, a two-family house that my great-grandfather had bought in 1882. My brother and I followed my father up stairs that I had never climbed. As we walked in single file behind my dad, I noticed that the walls of the living room and staircase of my grandparents' house were lined with framed sets of blue, red, and yellow ribbons, which Pop had won for his tulips. My grandparents' bedroom was a cabinet of wonders, its walls decorated with only blue ribbons, along with photographs of family members I would never meet. My dad led my brother and me past the bedroom and onto a sun porch adjoining it. On the right was a trunk that was brimming with toys; it reminded me of something I'd recently seen in a Disney movie. My father turned left, though. Opening a closet door, he pulled out dozens of musty leather books: partially used bank ledgers. (Pop had once been a janitor at the First National Bank on Baltimore Street.) The books were about an inch thick, with big blue- and red-lined pages. A few had been tied with string where the red leather binding had lost its strength. Slowly and silently, he turned glue-stiffened pages that were covered, front and back, with newspaper clippings. So—Pop Gates had kept scrapbooks! That was his second hobby.

The clippings covered various news stories and human-interest items. There were hundreds of them, seemingly random, sharing only a macabre tenor: headlines about injuries and death, especially murders and fatal accidents; articles about war casualties, robberies, automobile accidents, and even plane crashes. Nestled among them were obituaries, funeral notices, funeral programs, and those laminated bookmarks noting the passing of the dead, complete with a bit of religious verse, a passage from the Bible, birth and death dates, and sometimes a photograph of the deceased. Those scrapbooks were like an archive, decade by decade, of Cumberland's colored dead, although plenty of dead white people poked their pale visages out of those pages as well, fighting for air among all those Negroes.

The author's great-great-grandmother Jane Gates; his grandfather Edward Gates; and his parents.

After a while, it occurred to me that the white and the colored denizens of the obituary notices were dressed alike, their sartorial equality reflecting the shared aesthetic of an Olan Mills photography parlor: three-piece suits and white starched collars, hair slicked down or pressed. I felt as if those scrapbooks were a portal into a world I did not know. I began to wonder: Who were these people?

"Look here, boy," Daddy said, startling me as he broke the silence. There, deep in those yellowing pages of newsprint, were two obituaries. One, dated Saturday, January 7, 1888, was from the Cumberland *Evening Times*. The headline read "DEATH OF 'AUNT JANE GATES' ":

> Last night at 11 o'clock "Aunt Jane Gates," colored, a family servant of the Stover's died in the 75th year of her age. She has lived for a long time on Green Street where her death occurred. Her remains will be interred at Rose Hill Cemetery tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock. Services will be held at her residence on Green Street.

I especially remember another article that called her "an estimable colored woman." Daddy then retrieved a framed photograph of this woman, who had lived just up the street from where we sat, and was buried steps away from Pop Gates's newly dug grave. "That woman was Pop's grandmother," Daddy said. "She is your great-great-grandmother. And she is the oldest Gates."

I stared at the picture until I had that face memorized, an image of the oldest colored woman I'd ever seen, etched indelibly into my nine-year-old head. In 1979, my great-aunt Pansy made a present to me of the original, which now hangs in my kitchen. What was most striking about the woman in the photograph, apart from the white nurse's hat and uniform she wore, was that she didn't look like a Gates. She was much darker than her grandson. I would have guessed that she was about my color, although the sepia patina that the photograph has acquired over a century and a quarter makes it hard to tell. But she had a long, straight nose, light eyes, high cheekbones, and an austere countenance. Her hair, poking out from under her nurse's bonnet, appeared to be a curly wave. She didn't look especially feminine; in fact, she could have been a man in drag, as my father pointed out years later with irreverent glee.

Finally, Daddy shut the album and slowly stood up. By the time we made our way downstairs, the house was teeming with family. Enough food to start a restaurant had been crowded onto the oak dining table. I headed for the fried chicken and the potato salad, hungry all of a sudden, not sure what had taken place upstairs. When I got home, I looked up the word "estimable."

My career as a historian began that afternoon in 1960. Soon after the funeral, I became obsessed with my family tree. I peppered my mother and father with questions about the names of their ancestors, their birthplaces and birthdays, their occupations, the places and dates of their deaths. My father was the storyteller of the family, and most of my conversations about our ancestors ended up being with him.

And, besides, I was far more concerned with my Gates lineage than I was with my mother's ancestors, as I was convinced that if any distinction was to be found on my family tree it would be through the Gates branches, given the family members' skin color and the texture of their hair, and the fact that they had owned so much property for so long, including a two-hundred-acre farm, where my father was born, in 1913, at Patterson Creek, just across the West Virginia border. On more than one occasion, my father tried to tell me that my mother's family was more distinguished than his, but I thought that he was being modest. He never seemed to tire of these interrogations, even when I repeated questions that I had asked a year or two earlier. I dutifully began to write it all down, in a brown spiral notebook.

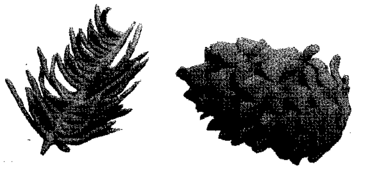
Sometimes I would grow bored and put the notebook away; then, after a few days or weeks had passed, I would be seized with a desire to learn more. Once, I took my notebook for a presentation before my fifth-grade class but found myself embarrassed that I was unable to explain, when asked, how my ancestors had come to be slaves, or where in Africa they had come from. The girl who asked was, like most of my classmates, white. As far as I knew, the only way to explore a black family's history was through family stories.

Eventually, as glossy magazines began to advertise that they could send you your family's "coat of arms," I longed to possess the knowledge that would allow me to claim one of these. What I really wanted, as much as the family tree detailing the identity of my African-American ancestors, was a family crest that would tie us to our white ancestors. History had allowed them to hide, to avoid responsibility for their progeny. Perhaps that crest could lead to a new set of ancestors and cousins whose identities had been reduced to whispers, gossip, and wishful thinking—the speculation, sometimes playful and sometimes maddened, that fuelled so many discussions among my father and his siblings.

When we studied American Colonial history in fourth grade, we learned that the first black slaves arrived on the James River in 1619, two hundred years before Jane Gates was born. Were there black people who could trace their families that far back? I couldn't bring myself to order the family tree of some other Gates line, though I did relish the idea that we were related, somehow, to Horatio Gates, the Revolutionary War general whom we had studied at school.

I was searching not just for the names of my ancestors to fill out my family tree but also for stories about them. Each new name that I was able to find and print in my notebook was another link to the colored past that had produced, by fits and starts, but also, inevitably, the person I had become and was becoming. On my mother's side, J. R. Clifford, my great-uncle, was, I learned, the first black man to be admitted to the bar in the state of West Virginia. Far more thrilling to me was the fact that, during the Civil War, he had served in the U.S. Colored Troops. He had also published his own newspaper, the *Pioneer Press*, in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Later, I learned that, in 1905, he had co-founded the Niagara Movement—the forerunner of the N.A.A.C.P.—with W. E. B. Du Bois. On my father's side, three generations of Jane Gates's descendants had graduated from Howard University, starting with my great-aunt Pansy, in 1910, and including two generations of dentists. My father's first cousin had graduated from Harvard Law School in 1949; there he had met his wife, who, in 1955, was the first black woman to earn a Ph.D. in comparative literature at Harvard. Kind of hard to top that, my father would argue, but J. R. Clifford knew Du Bois, and Du Bois was the ultimate trump card, black history's ace of spades.

With just a little effort, most African-Americans can trace at least one line of their family back to the 1870 federal census, which was the first taken after the Civil War and is therefore the first in which all our ancestors appear as citizens with two names, rather than as property. In the 1850 and 1860 censuses, there is a list of "Slave Inhabitants" held by each owner, recorded by age, gender, and color (black or mulatto) but not by name. Since many freedmen took their surnames from their masters, one part of the pre-1870 puzzle can sometimes be solved through a simple comparison: once you have found your ancestor in the 1870 census, you can examine the "Slave Inhabitants" list from the 1850 and 1860 censuses to see if a white person with the same surname and in the same geographical area owned a slave; then see whether a slave ten or twenty years younger than your ancestor is identified on those lists. Estate papers and property records can also be used to cobble together a history of slave ancestors. The 1870 census, which relied on the same door-to-door information gathering used when I was a boy, lists all the members of a particular household, by their full names, birth places, ages, and occupations.



Census data, despite their simplicity, can be surprisingly revealing. The entry for Jane Gates, for example, says the following, if I summarize the relevant columns: "Jane Gates, age 51, female, mulatto, laundress and nurse, owns real estate valued at $1,400, born in Maryland, cannot read or write." A mulatto? An illiterate mulatto at that? Nothing in the oral lore of the Gates family had prepared me for either of these facts. Who was Jane's father? And who was the father of her children? With her in the house are her daughter Alice, age twenty-two; her son, Edward, age twelve; and two grandchildren (Jennie, age five, and David, age nine, both children of her daughter Laura). Edward and David are in school and can read and write. Alice can read but not write; she also works as a laundress and nurse.

As a child, I had been told with absolute certainty that the Gateses were descended from an Irishman named Samuel Brady, who supposedly owned Jane, fathered her children, and gave her the money to purchase her home. Jane's son (and Pop's father), Edward, my great-grandfather, who was born into slavery in 1857, on Brady's farm, would, when questioned by his children, respond only that he and his siblings all shared the same father. It was his children—my grandfather's generation—who were the source of the Brady rumor. Had Jane given her son some clue that this was so? Did Edward the elder whisper it to Pop in a moment of speculation or confessional intimacy? Whatever the source of the rumor, it had become canon law by the time I was born.

The more I learned about Brady and the Gateses, the more likely it seemed that he had known Jane and, indeed, slept with her, as family lore held. Edward Gates was born—I learned from his obituary, of 1945—"on the Brady Farm near Cresaptown." According to extensive research by Jane Ailes, a genealogist (and Brady's third-great-granddaughter), Samuel Brady had a farm just outside Cresaptown, exactly as family legend had it.

And between 1828 and 1865 Samuel Brady owned slaves, starting with one, and reaching a high point of forty-two, in 1850, according to the federal census. Brady was a study in contradictions: three of his sons fought for the Confederacy, and one of them spent eighteen months in a Union prison; nevertheless, a year before the war ended, Brady signed deeds of manumission for four of his slaves so that they could enlist in the 30th Regiment of the U.S. Colored Troops and fight for the North.

Emboldened by these findings, I set out to prove or disprove the family story about the supposed father of Jane's children. In the past decade, developments in DNA testing and the retrieval and digitization of archival records have made it possible for black families to begin to trace their ancestry further back through American history and, ultimately, even across the Atlantic. In 2005, I placed an advertisement in the Cumberland *Times* and posted a message on a Brady-family online forum asking for male descendants of Samuel Brady to identify themselves, hoping that one of them would submit a DNA sample for a belated paternity test.

One of Brady's direct male descendants and a direct male descendant of Brady's brother William agreed to take a DNA test. The tests established, without a doubt, that Samuel Brady was not the father of Jane Gates's children. When I told my father and his sister, Helen, what the tests had revealed, Aunt Helen summed up the reaction of just about all the Gates family members: "I've been a Brady eighty-nine years, and I am still a Brady, no matter what that test says."

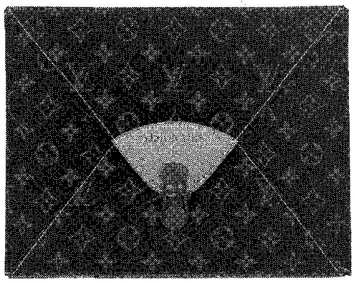
I found myself pleased by Aunt Helen's defiance, as irrational as it might seem; I guess I had always thought of myself as a Brady, too. Being told that we weren't Bradys was a bit like being orphaned. For my cousin John Gates, there will always be two stories about our ancestry: the story that our genes tell, and the story that our ancestors told. And he wants both to be in play for his three sons and his grandchildren. The challenge of genealogy used to be the reconciliation of a family's oral memories with public written records, and in the search for one's ancestors nothing is as pleasing as having these two streams of testimony confirm each other. But genetics can now demolish or affirm a family's most cherished beliefs and stories with just a bit of saliva and a cotton swab.

What about the father of Jane's children, then? Well, given that all males with my Y-DNA marker (it's known as the Ui Neill haplotype) bear one of a few dozen surnames, a team of genealogists and I have begun to compile a list of all the men with those names in the 1850 and 1860 censuses for Allegany County, Maryland. We are advertising for their male descendants, and asking them to take a DNA test. With a little patience, and a lot of luck, perhaps DNA can solve the last remaining mystery in the Gates family line, the secret that Jane Gates took with her to her grave.

African-American history is a young discipline; restoring the branches of even one black-family tree can profoundly change our understanding of the larger story of who the African-American people really are. By telling and retelling the stories of our ancestors, we can move that history from our kitchens and parlors into the textbooks, ultimately changing the official narrative of American history itself.

My family tree hangs in my kitchen, just across from the photograph of Jane Gates. But the graphic record of the entangled blood lines, impressive and gratifying though it is, does not fulfill my boyhood longing for a coat of arms. Of the scores of names neatly arrayed in those boxes, only one is that of a white ancestor, even though a "genetic admixture" test reveals me to be fifty per cent "European." Until the family crest of the Irishman who fathered Jane Gates's children graces my family tree, along with his name and the names of his ancestors, my family story will remain a tale only half told.

Then again, I'm still amazed by the ancestral additions I've already gained. The genealogists, in the process of researching my family tree, found three sets of my fourth-great-grandparents, all free Negroes, including, on my mother's side, John Redman, who en-



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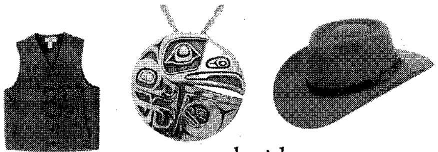

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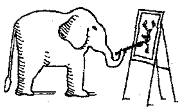

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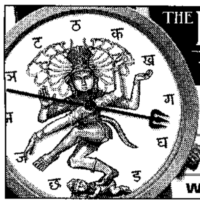

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listed in the Continental Army, at Winchester, Virginia, in 1778, and served until 1782, seeing combat near Savannah, Georgia. So we had a patriot ancestor after all, even if his name wasn't Horatio and even if he wasn't a Gates. When I discovered that my mother had descended from seven lines of Negroes who had been freed by the eighteen-thirties—three of them by 1776—I felt chagrined that I hadn't spent more time interviewing her. She had an enigmatic reserve when it came to her family's past, an attitude that was in stark contrast to my father's fondness for vivid narratives. "We come from people," she liked to say.

I had long assumed that Pop Gates's scrapbooks had been discarded, perhaps after a spring cleaning, by someone who wasn't aware of their value or by someone who didn't wish to revisit the past. As part of the celebration of my father's ninety-fifth birthday, last summer, I decided to scan the photographs owned by the far-flung Gates family members, so that we could collect them in a book and present it to him. Amid my aunt Helen's possessions, my cousin Bette found a red-and-black bank ledger, full of old news clippings and stamped with the logo of Cumberland's First National Bank. My grandfather was such a shadowy figure in my life that I can't even remember the sound of his voice. But the discovery of this scrapbook, covering the years 1943-46, allowed me to take a stroll through his mind.

I am tempted to call the scrapbook Pop Gates's Book of the Dead, just as I might have been when I was nine. Its interpretation of this grim theme is even more all-encompassing than I had remembered, though. The book is full of statistics about war casualties but also contains intimate stories about the individual dead. And tallies of Cumberland's wartime losses are mixed in with articles cataloguing the massacre of thousands of Jews and Serbs and reports about the starving population of India.

On April 5, 1943, an article reports that the governor of Alabama "Calls for Full Racial Segregation": "The two races are distinct. They occupy spheres in life that began in different origins, have continued in diverging channels and should remain separate, as they have always been since the creation. No influences from outside should or can change these fundamental safety principles." But the war was bringing hope for race relations, and Pop recorded that, too. While, early in the scrapbook, an A.P. article applauds "the first all-Negro division activated by the United States Army" because "at the outbreak of war, the American Negro clamored for an active part in the nation's war effort," a feature near the book's end, datelined Paris, March 20, 1945, announces, "Negroes and Whites . . . Go Into Battle Side by Side for First Times in U.S. Army History." The pages of Pop's chronicle celebrate the appointment of Francis Ellis Rivers as a City Court judge in New York, as well as the first nine months of service of Hugh Mulzac, the "First Negro Captain of an American Ship."

Pop compiled these clippings about the wartime heroics of black servicemen while working as a janitor at the First National Bank. At sixty-three, he was too old to serve but was required to register. Pop's draft-registration card from 1942 contains the fullest description of him that has ever come to my attention: his height is five feet eight inches, his eyes are hazel, his weight is a hundred and sixty-two pounds, his hair is gray, and his complexion is "ruddy." (The choices for complexion were "sallow," "light," "ruddy," "dark," "freckled," "light brown," "dark brown," and "black.") Under the column for "Race," the "White" box had initially been checked; evidently, the registrar had taken him for a white man. In decisive black ink, the check mark was crossed out. The registrant must have demurred. (By contrast, Pop's brother Roscoe chose to take advantage of a similar error that year and pass for white.) Identity wasn't merely a matter of skin color; it was a matter of history. Pop knew himself to be an estimable colored man. A new check mark appeared beside "Negro." ♦

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

FROM THE TRANSITION TEAM

BY BRUCE McCALL

Dear Potential Obama Administration Cabinet Member:

Please complete this form, providing full and honest answers to all questions. N.B.: Why not call or text ten friends and have them submit this form, too?

Part I: Background

1. Do you worry that someone might inform on you to Lou Dobbs about how many unregistered aliens are employed in your household(s)?

2. Circle any of the following activities that you have engaged in.

a. Entertained a kleagle of the Ku Klux Klan in your home.

b. Taken a sip from someone else's Coke/Diet Coke.

c. Been abducted by aliens and taken to Karl Rove's office.

d. Opened an e-mail with the subject line "Make her jaw drop."

3. Who would be most interested to learn that you have flown on Ron Burkle's private jet with Bill Clinton?

a. The R.N.C.

b. *Hustler*.

c. The U.S. Attorney General.

d. Hillary.

4. Have you ever socialized with:

a. A Baldwin brother?

b. A Serbian war criminal?

c. A Senate page?

d. Senator Joseph Lieberman?

5. Please provide the proper phonetic pronunciation of "Chicago." ________

Part II (Churchgoers Only)

If your pastor has ever used such themes as "Most folks are nice," "Thank God for little puppy dogs," and "Strawberry socials are the glue holding American civilization together" as the topic of a sermon, please FedEx his or her name and address to the above address and charge it to the D.N.C.

Part III: Reliability

My loyalty to President-elect Obama is so deep that I would:

a. Fill in for him at a private White House lunch with Al Gore.

b. Volunteer to paper-train his family's new puppy.

c. Break the news to Hillary if she is not named Secretary of State.

Part IV: The Economy

I would rather use the $700 billion in federal bailout funds to:

a. Bail out the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

b. Hire John McCain to try to double the money at the Vegas craps tables.

c. Finance an accelerated scientific program to clone Warren Buffett twelve times and create a new Supercouncil of Economic Advisers.

Part V: Initiative

1. The First Lady's pet project during the President's first term should be:

a. Creating a network of Be Proud of America clubs in the public schools.

b. Raising math scores.

c. Outlawing Bloomin' Onions.

d. Leading a movement to name the first female Major League Baseball manager.

2. To renew a sense of hope in America, I would immediately:

a. Bleach ten thousand grizzly bears white and create the effect of a polar-bear population explosion by placing them in neighborhoods all over the Northern U.S.

b. Stage a nationwide contest to rename the White House and eliminate the inappropriate Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism.

c. Rush a few thousand books to the George W. Bush Library before it opens.

P.S. We know who you are, "Ms. Haras Nilap," and there is no position open for you at this time. ♦

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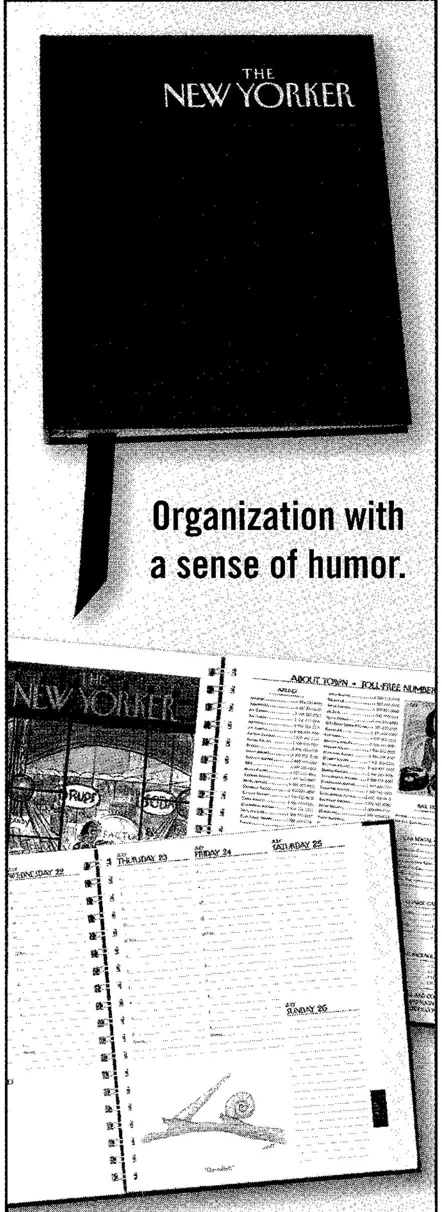

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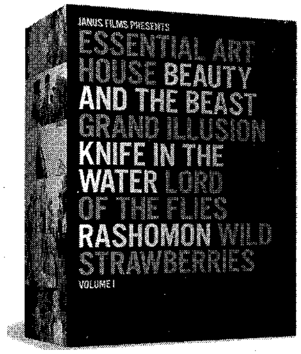

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LETTER FROM WEST HOLLYWOOD

SPECIAL TREATMENT

The rise of luxury rehab.

BY AMANDA FORTINI

Just before dawn one morning in June, Howard Samuels, the executive director of the Wonderland Center—a private alcohol-and-drug rehab facility in West Hollywood, California—was standing in the spacious foyer of his Craftsman-style house, greeting his publicist, Cathy Griffin. They were about to head over to Fox Studios, where Samuels, who frequently turns up on the punditry circuit when an actor overdoses, relapses, or checks herself in, was scheduled to discuss the recent drug bust of Tatum O'Neal and the apparent bisexuality of Lindsay Lohan, on "The Morning Show with Mike and Juliet." "Do you want any coffee?" Samuels asked Griffin, adding, "I've had two cups already." Samuels is a recovering cocaine and heroin addict who in August, at the age of fifty-six, celebrated twenty-four years of sobriety. Caffeine is the only addictive substance permitted in the Samuels household. (His thirty-eight-year-old wife, Gabrielle, has also conquered several addictions—alcohol, crystal meth, and compulsive eating.) Samuels is a tall, solidly built man with close-set green eyes, a prominent nose, and lips that cover his teeth when he talks, occasionally giving the impression of missing dentures. He was wearing a gray linen Armani jacket with cuffed jeans and Converse Chuck Taylor sneakers.

"Did you see the New York *Post*?" Griffin asked, wrestling a manila folder from her slouchy pink-leather purse. She began to brief Samuels on the celebrity stumbles that he'd be discussing. The day before, Tatum O'Neal had been caught attempting to buy crack on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. "Originally, Tatum's story was that she was researching a role," Griffin explained. "Now she's saying her dog's death prompted the drug buy."

Griffin, who spent thirty years covering celebrities as a journalist for, among other outlets, "Hard Copy" and "A Current Affair," is also Liz Smith's "West Coast legwoman"—she provides items about the Hollywood set. When she was hired by Wonderland, the *Daily News* reported on the possible conflict of interest. Samuels told the paper, "We have a confidential facility. Anybody that leaks anything about anyone is automatically fired."

"Lindsay has been photographed kissing Samantha Ronson," Griffin continued, tapping a glossy nail on the kitchen counter. "Now she's supposedly selling an exclusive story to a magazine for one million dollars."

"*That's* the addiction to fame," Samuels said, looking pleased to have drawn the connection. "I mean, I have nothing against being with a woman, but it's the selling of the magazine cover. It's just another thing to fill the void."

Lindsay Lohan, who spent a month at Wonderland beginning in January of last year, is perhaps the center's most well-known patient. (Mike Tyson arrived shortly after Lohan and stayed for close to a year.) Lohan was later dismissive of her time there, saying that the staff had never treated anyone as "hardcore" as she was. Three months after leaving Wonderland, she was arrested for driving under the influence. She then entered Promises, the Malibu-based rehab center. When I asked Griffin whether it was appropriate for Samuels to comment publicly on a former patient, she replied, "He was able to go on TV and not ever cross the line when Lindsay checked into Promises. There was a total media blitz for two weeks, and you don't get a lot of opportunities like that. He wasn't her therapist, anyway; he's the executive director."

Samuels also maintains a private therapy practice, focussed mainly on issues of addiction, in the guest cottage behind his house. Griffin is a former patient. Samuels counselled her, in person and by phone, through her early days of recidi-

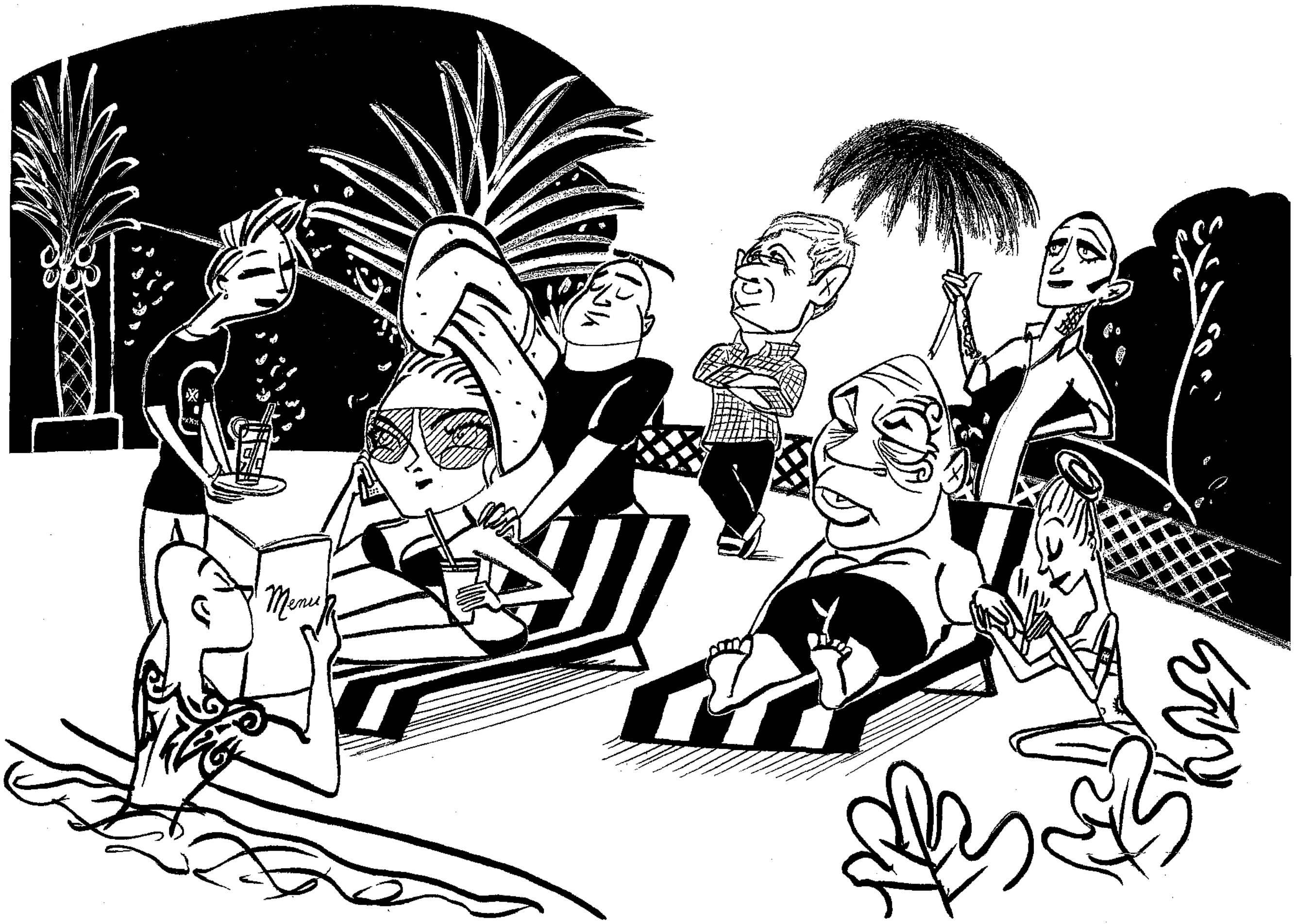
TOM BACHTELL

vism. (One of her relapses occurred during a trip to Hawaii: "I said, 'Howard, I'm drinking a mai tai, what's the point?'") Her faith in his talents is absolute. "Howard can help addiction to be understood by the public. He can simplify it and destigmatize it. The celebrities have brought it to the forefront—he's just the right person in the right place at the right time." Samuels puts it much the same way. "You know, celebrities mirror what is happening in the rest of the country," he said, referring to the estimated 24.9 million Americans addicted to alcohol or drugs. "It's so important to get that message out. . . . That's the struggle, O.K.? Is to try to educate people who think the only reason I'm going to Fox today is *Tatum O'Neal!*"

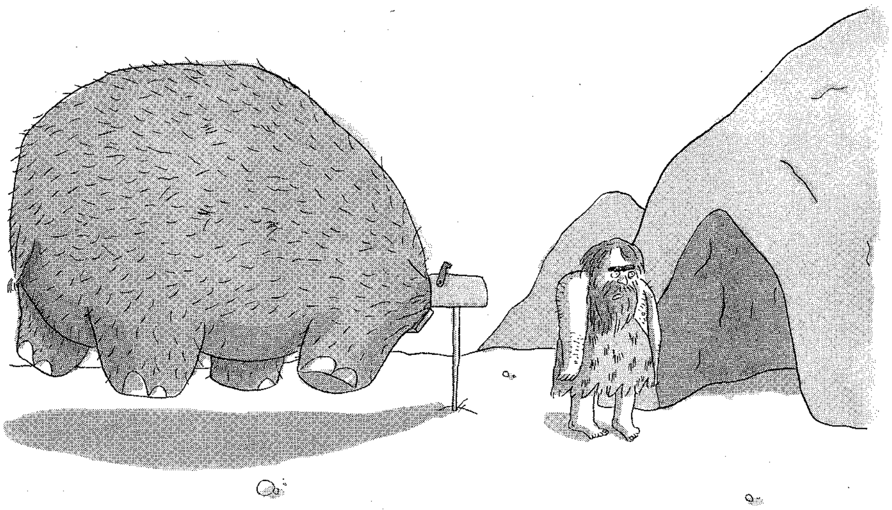
At the studio, having received a dusting of powder on his tanned face ("I saw you on VH1, talking about Mötley Crüe," the makeup artist told him), Samuels sat in a corona of bright stage light. He crossed and uncrossed his legs, waiting for a producer to give him the signal to speak. At one point, Griffin scurried up and snatched the tortoiseshell glasses from the lapel pocket of his jacket. A look of intense concentration came over his face as the first question was put to him through the headphones. "Well, *absolutely* there's hope for these two," he began. "In Hollywood, the greatest curse that someone can have is to be young, beautiful, wealthy, and famous. Because there's only one place to go, and that's *down*."

Samuels has been treating a substantial segment of drug-addicted Hollywood for fifteen years. I accompanied him to several Alcoholics Anonymous meetings—he has been attending A.A. for eighteen years—and at every one he was greeted by people whom he had treated, or who were hoping to be treated by him. "Half of this town is in meetings," he told me, "and we're saving seats for the other half." One Sunday night, after an A.A. meeting in Beverly Hills that had a particularly flirtatious atmosphere—dating within the program, though frowned upon, is known as "thirteenth-stepping"—Samuels and I were driving down Third Street when he suddenly leaned over me to point out a small red house. "Now, I've got to tell you, I did an intervention on a guy here," Samuels said. He named a film-and-TV actor from the nineteen-seventies. "Remember him? He lived there with his mother. Unfortunately, you can't use his name." During another car ride, he drew my attention to the El Royale apartment building on Rossmore, where he had staged an intervention on a more current leading man. "I've pretty much worked with everybody in Hollywood," Samuels said, listing several famous names as he guided his black Audi sedan through a turn. "I could go on forever, you know what I mean?" Above the fireplace in Samuels's living room hangs a photograph of his beachfront wedding party: Christian Slater, at the back of the crowd, is making a victory sign with his arms in the air.

Samuels was, in a sense, a celebrity addict himself. His father, Howard J. Samuels, was a wealthy businessman who co-founded, along with his brother Richard, the Kordite Corporation, which



At Wonderland, addicts are permitted to use cell phones and computers. Actors are released to work on films; musicians can tour.



"*Bobby, your mammoth kit is here.*"

• •

manufactured Baggies and other plastic products; he also served as Under-Secretary of Commerce in the Johnson Administration. For the younger Samuels, using drugs was a way to rebel: "There was a huge amount of pressure to succeed, and I just said, 'Fuck you.'" In January of 1970, while his father was campaigning for the Democratic nomination for governor of New York, the *Times* reported that the seventeen-year-old Samuels had been arrested in Greenwich Village two months earlier; he was charged "with possession of a hashish pipe and three amphetamines." A year later, Samuels was apprehended at Kennedy Airport, for possession of cocaine and heroin. The scandal made the front page of the *Daily News*.

Samuels spent an unsuccessful year in rehab at a facility called Encounter (now closed), in lower Manhattan. Over the next ten years, his drug abuse intensified. He stole from his mother and his girlfriend, and from wallets left in coatrooms at Park Avenue parties. He overdosed on cocaine. One morning, lacking a syringe, he slit open his shoulder with a razor blade in order to rub cocaine directly into the wound. His family staged a series of interventions, and in 1984 Samuels agreed to enter rehab again, this time at Phoenix House, in Santa Ana, California.

The treatment at Phoenix House is based on what's known as the "therapeutic community" model—in the eighties, this meant that residents, as members of a community that lived and performed chores together, were expected to challenge, badger, and often verbally or physically humiliate one another. (The approach, sometimes called "attack therapy," was intended to wear down a patient's defenses, but has mostly fallen out of favor. Phoenix House now employs a less punitive version of the model.) Samuels says he shared a room with twenty-five other men, who showered en masse. He was hollered at, made to wear dunce signs, and forced to scrub toilet bowls with a toothbrush. During his stay, his father suffered a fatal heart attack, and Samuels, released to attend his funeral, experienced a "psychic shift": "I realized I did not want to die a drug addict. I did not want to be buried with the epitaph 'He Had Potential.'" Samuels completed the eighteen-month program, and then went back to school, eventually receiving a master's degree in psychology from Antioch University and a Psy.D. in clinical psychology from Ryokan College, in Los Angeles—an accomplishment he's particularly proud of, because he suffers from dyslexia.

In 1994, he went to work at Promises, in West Los Angeles, first as a counsellor and later as the program director. In 1997, Samuels was part of a team that helped the founder, Richard Rogg, set up the center's luxurious Malibu campus. Many of Hollywood's high-profile patients of the past decade have been treated at Promises Malibu—Ozzy Osbourne, Robert Downey, Jr., Andy Dick, Ben Affleck, Charlie Sheen, Matthew Perry, and Britney Spears among them—and it was there that Samuels began to build the client base for his private practice and to form his own ideas about rehab. "At Promises, you know, we built a beautiful place under the philosophy of 'Let's seduce them into treatment; why punish them by having them go to a dump?'"

That philosophy represented a departure from traditional methods of rehab, even for celebrities. Twenty-five years ago, when Elizabeth Taylor checked herself into the Betty Ford Center, seeking treatment for an addiction to Percodan and alcohol, she shared an austerely furnished room with a roommate. She took her meals in the cafeteria, waited to use the communal phone, and performed the "therapeutic duties" required of all patients (bed-making, coffee-making, light sweeping). "We really believe that good treatment is the same for everyone," John Schwarzlose, the C.E.O. and founding director of the Betty Ford Center, said of the program's egalitarian ethos, which has remained consistent to this day.

The program at the Betty Ford Center has its origins in the Minnesota Model, a therapeutic approach rooted in A.A.'s Twelve Steps and developed in the nineteen-fifties at Willmar State Hospital, a psychiatric institution in Willmar, Minnesota, by a psychologist named Dan Anderson. At the time, alcoholism was still widely considered a failure of will; alcoholics were institutionalized, incarcerated, or left to sink into indigence. Anderson believed that addiction to alcohol (and other drugs) was a "multifaceted illness" ("physical, psychological, social, and spiritual"), and he sought to develop a more humane treatment. His method required a team of professionals—psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, spiritual counsellors, nutritionists—and a minimum in-patient stay of twenty-two to twenty-eight days. In 1961, Anderson went to work at Hazelden, a rehab clinic in Center City, Minnesota, and, over the next twenty years, his model became standard at treatment centers across the country.

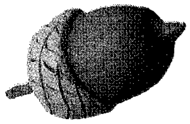
By the nineteen-eighties, insurance companies intent on containing costs began to suggest that the Minnesota Model was excessive. They maintained that there was little evidence that residential treatment was any more effective than a less expensive outpatient version. (Many plans now cover only outpatient treatment, or limit in-patient stays to between three and seven days.) According to the Treatment Research Institute, nearly half of all residential treatment centers in this country have closed since the early eighties. In the late nineties, luxury rehab centers, catering to self-paying patients, began to proliferate. Today, with a twenty-one-mile coastline and a population of roughly thirteen thousand, Malibu alone has twenty-nine licensed rehab establishments. Many are operated out of palatial estates; most are for-profit, do not take insurance, and expect their fee, sometimes as high as sixty-eight thousand dollars a month, to be paid up front. (Hazelden and Betty Ford, both nonprofit clinics, charge twenty-six thousand dollars and twenty-four thousand dollars for twenty-eight and thirty days, respectively, and will accept insurance.)

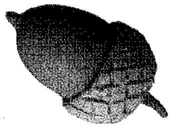
Samuels and his wife founded the Wonderland Center with Bernadine Fried, the clinical director, and her husband, Alex Shohet, in early 2006. Wonderland charges forty-eight thousand dollars a month for a shared room and fifty-eight thousand dollars for a single room, and does not take insurance. The usual length of treatment is thirty days, although, unlike most rehab clinics, Wonderland will allow shorter stays, sometimes of a week or two. On occasion, the center offers scholarships. I witnessed Samuels arrange for a scholarship for a woman I'll call Greta, a singer from an early-nineties band, after he heard her speak about her fifteen-year struggle with heroin addiction at an A.A. meeting. ("I'll do your shit work—I'm just having a hard time and really need some help," she told him.)

Like many rehab facilities, Wonderland bases its treatment on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. But Samuels and Fried assert that their establishment offers a uniquely "individualized" program. Residents are permitted to use cell phones and computers, for example, and many continue to conduct business during their stay. They are taken on shopping trips, and are allowed to bring their dogs. Actors are sometimes released to work on films; musicians can travel for tours.

Many treatment professionals argue that granting this much agency to addicts is no way to treat a condition that Bill Wilson, the co-founder of A.A., described as "self-will run riot." "Addicts need frustration; they need limits; they need structure. They need to learn how to tolerate those things," Dr. Drew Pinsky, the service director of the well-regarded rehab program at Las Encinas Hospital, in Pasadena, said. "The more you cater to an addict's demands, the more you support their disease. Our approach at Las Encinas is 'Get with the program or get out.' " John MacDougall, the director of spiritual guidance at Hazelden, told me, "No one leaves here—except for a funeral, if a close relative dies. We ask you to commit for twenty-eight days. Actually, I can only remember one exception in the fourteen years I've been here, and he had to present a treaty at the United Nations."

The Wonderland Center occupies a seven-million-dollar property on Mulholland Drive, in Laurel Canyon. Behind a massive iron gate, three cream-colored houses with terra-cotta roofs are set back from the road by a long, winding path that staff members navigate with golf carts. The bedrooms are simple, with crisp white duvet covers and wooden armoires. (There are only six single rooms, because clients often have, in the parlance of Wonderland, "a tendency to isolate.") There are two small kidney-bean-shaped pools, and two sprawling patios. Here, between sessions, clients lounge on wrought-iron furniture and talk and text-message and smoke, flicking their ashes into lidded ashtrays. One has the overwhelming sense of attending a weekend party at a cozy but understated house.





Late in the afternoon on the last Friday in June, Wonderland's eight in-residence patients—Wonderland has fourteen beds, but the summer months are slow—had completed their "Bridging Mind and Body" group session, in which they had written letters to themselves ("Remind yourself what skills and abilities you have, what you are good at . . .") and enjoyed a lunch of grilled lobster tails with garlic butter. Every morning, the residents, whom the staff refer to as "clients," are awakened between seven-thirty and eight. They meditate, eat breakfast, and exercise, either performing yoga poses with an instructor who comes to Wonderland, or working out at Crunch on Sunset Boulevard, under the supervision of a Wonderland employee. During the day, they attend two or three group sessions—"Anger Management," "Sex and Love Addiction," "Music Therapy"—and in the evenings they are driven to an off-site A.A. meeting. Samuels declines to push A.A. on resistant patients, though he says that most will relapse "until they *finally* surrender to the reality of doing it through A.A."

Around three o'clock, the clients, along with several day patients, began taking seats in the large living room for the last group session of the week, "The Beast," which is run by Samuels. "The Beast," Samuels told me later, "is the drug, the alcohol, the unavailable man, the depression. It is that self-destructive energy that destroys us, which we can't stop."

Samuels lifted a glass of iced tea—"Cheers, everybody!"—and called the session to order. Dressed in a pink button-down shirt, the cuffs undone and the collar open to reveal a patch of graying chest hair, he began to pace back and forth. "The great news is that it's Friday, right? So what does that mean? That means that tonight you're still in rehab. That means there's no drinking tonight, no crack pipe tonight, no little line of blow, no pills, no weed."

The clients, looking drained at the end of a long week of self-scrutiny, laughed ruefully. Samuels went on, "But you're still going to be dealing with the Beast, O.K.? Because the Beast is going to tell you that it's Friday night, and it's time to get loaded! I gotta say, normies have that voice, too." "Normies," or non-addicts, are frequently invoked by the residents of Wonderland as an impossible ideal; normies are thought not to suffer from pain or depression or obsessions. Samuels is fond of reminding people that he is not a normie—"Howard Samuels: dope fiend, convicted felon," he routinely announces.

"Who has a Beast?" Samuels asked, scanning the room.

Max, a college professor of finance who was at Wonderland to kick a five-year pill-and-cough-syrup habit, spoke up from the far end of the sofa. (All the clients' names have been changed to protect their privacy.) "You know, I have a pretty empty kitchen," he said, "and when parents and friends ask me why I say, 'Because if I had anything in there that I liked, I'd eat the whole thing.' I can't go buy a package of Oreos, because I'll eat it in one sitting. That's the Beast, too. I can't just take one Oreo. I'll go back and I'll go back and I'll go back. It's not a drug but it's . . . out of control."

"Well, you know, Max, you're obsessive-compulsive, and the obsessive-compulsiveness isn't just centered around drugs and alcohol," Samuels said. "Once you get sober, you're still going to be obsessive-compulsive. But I'd much rather have you deal with not being able to stop eating Oreos than not being able to stop—what's your drug of choice?"

"Opiates."

"Opiates, O.K. Let's move out the opiates—I'm happy with the Oreos." But Max did not look happy. He was clearly disturbed by the Oreo obsession. Samuels went on, "Now, once you get to be about two hundred or three hundred pounds, we'll have to deal with that. We'll send you to an Oreo twelve-step meeting, all right?" Max mustered a chuckle.

Samuels uses an avuncular, teasing sense of humor to draw people out. Several members of the Los Angeles recovery community told me that they felt he did not maintain sufficient professional boundaries—that it was inappropriate, for instance, for him to frequent the same A.A. meetings that his patients attend. One woman recalled seeing him whiz down the street in her neighborhood: "He's got a patient in the passenger seat, and is test-driving the patient's new hundred-thousand-dollar Mercedes." But I was told by an entertainment executive who is being treated by Samuels for his cocaine habit, "He cuts through the bullshit; he's not playing footsie."

Samuels took a gulp of tea and continued pacing. "Who else?" he asked.

Nicole, a young woman with dark, sad eyes and strawberry-blond hair pulled into a loose ponytail, spoke next. "My Beast says that . . . it wouldn't really be a big deal if I had a drink today," she said, in a voice so soft the others in the room had to lean forward to hear her.

"Let me ask your Beast some questions," Samuels said. His tone was gentle, not jesting.

"What was your drug of choice?"

"Alcohol."

"How often did you drink?"

"Every day."

"What was your drink of choice?"

"Anything."

"How much would you drink during the day?"

"I'd have two bottles."

"Two bottles of what?"

"Vodka or rum."

"And how long did you do that for?"

"Four years."

"And how old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"So when did you start drinking?"

"When I was seventeen."

"When you were seventeen. And you were able to not go into treatment until you were twenty-one, huh?" He lowered his voice further.

"Yes."

"Wow. Do you think that that's normal?"

"No, but I think that . . . I think I can control it now. That's what my Beast says." As basic as Samuels's premise is, the metaphor seems to give the patients a way of talking about their addiction.

"And I want to ask your Beast, have you ever been able to control it?"

"Sometimes. . . ."

"Right, but how many times?"

"Not that many."

"Now, did some horrible things happen to you when you were drinking?"

"Yeah. . . ."

"So why would you want to drink? I mean, think about it, if horrible things happened to you because of alcohol . . . and you got locked up in treatment, ruined relationships, ruined years of your life, then why would you want to risk all of that for a liquid?"

"I just miss it." Nicole looked down at her lap. Three of the women in the room began to weep softly. The only other noise came from the adjacent kitchen, where the chef, Chris Wilson ("Tom Hanks's brother-in-law," Cathy Griffin informed me), was shredding carrots for the evening's salad.

Later that afternoon, Marvin, an eighty-year-old cocaine addict who had been at Wonderland for three weeks, agreed to show me his room. A white cardboard bakery box containing a dozen cupcakes with pale frosting sat on his desk ("so I can give them only to who I want to have them"). After his wife died, several years ago, Marvin took up with a much younger woman who turned him on to cocaine. The Wonderland staff had set him up with a team of doctors at Cedars-Sinai, who examined his heart, which can be strained by cocaine use. (I later observed one of the Wonderland staff members helping Marvin navigate Matchmaker.com, in the hope of finding him a non-enabling girlfriend online.) I asked Marvin whether he felt he had recovered. "I'm already a recovering optimist," he joked, deflecting the question. "My problem was depression—the drug was incidental. I don't do the twelve-step program. I don't go to the A.A. meetings. I don't need it. Yeah, and I needed a vacation anyway."

At dusk, as dinner wound down (Chilean sea bass with plum syrup, mini lamb-meat loaves with mint), a few of the clients lingered on the patio. A ghost of a girl, with troughs the color of bruises beneath her eyes and track marks up and down her arms, could be heard on her cell phone, crying. Earlier that afternoon, she had staggered over to me, a long silk scarf tied around her neck, and said that she was horribly "dope sick" and had spent the previous night at the hospital. This was her second visit to Wonderland. Nearby, a lanky young woman with dyed-blond hair was talking to a guitarist from an eighties pop band. "I'm on Suboxone now," she told him. (Suboxone is commonly used instead of methadone during heroin withdrawal.) "I'm coming off it. I've been through it before, but I'm scared."

Wonderland's co-founder Bernadine Fried met Samuels while lecturing on addiction at Antioch. Both worked for a time at Promises before leaving to start their own practices. "We developed these private practices and were really, you know, wildly successful. But we both missed working in a treatment environment," Fried said. Fried is forty-six, and has been sober for twenty years. Like Samuels, she is a former heroin addict; her husband, Alex Shohet, was once her dealer. Shohet suffered a relapse in 2000, but has now been sober for four years.

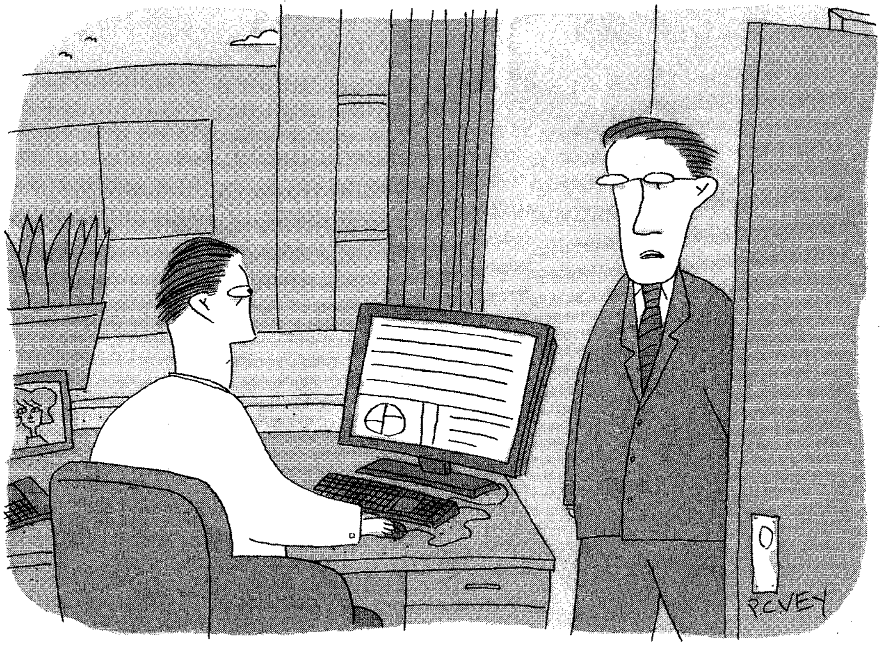
There has been tension among Wonderland's founders from the time the center first opened its doors. Samuels and Shohet clashed over the question of who should act as C.E.O., as well as over a "sober living" facility that Samuels was running out of one of his four homes. Shohet and Fried felt it was a violation of their non-compete agreement. (Samuels's neighbors were also upset. "He never brought it to the attention of anyone," one of them told me. "There were all these people going in and out of the house, and up all night, and this is a very residential neighborhood.") By December of last year, Samuels, Shohet, and Fried had begun attending "business therapy" together once a week. When that didn't help, they hired Andrew Spanswick, a social worker with a background in hospital management, to act as C.E.O. He was unable to resolve the dispute, and the partners agreed that each side—Shohet and Fried on one; Samuels and Spanswick on the other—would begin raising money to buy the other out.

On a Thursday morning in late June, I met Bernadine Fried, who has dark wavy hair and a gentle manner, at a ranch in Malibu, where she led a weekly session for Wonderland patients known as "equine-assisted psychotherapy" (an offering at many high-end treatment centers). During one of her sessions, clients would spend time with the ranch's five horses—grooming or feeding them, sometimes even painting on the horses' sides with watercolors. "I'll say, 'Paint something from your past, present, or future. Do half the horse from your past, half the horse from your future,'" Fried explained. (For the more apprehensive patients, there was a miniature donkey named Waffles.) The therapy is said to have originated in a treatment developed in Denmark in the nineteen-fifties; horseback riding, or hippotherapy, was believed to alleviate the physical effects of diseases like cerebral palsy and polio. Today, the idea seems to be that simply being around a horse can confer psychological benefits, and that horses can reveal a patient's unexpressed emotional states—reacting to feelings of fear or anxiety or aggression by whinnying, say, or by stamping their hooves. "Horses are able to read energy," Fried told me, as we brushed a palomino gelding named Chex. "They are incredible therapists. I let them show me what's going on with a person."

Fried claimed that the method was especially useful with clients who were hardest to reach by traditional means: those with a history of trauma, or who had repeatedly failed at recovery. These patients are the reason that she founded Wonderland. "I would have, like, the relapsing heroin addict that's been in rehab twelve times, and I'd think, What am I going to do with you? I have nowhere to send you," she said. Wonderland's patients also tend to be wealthy, and therefore to have considerable resources for masking their addictions. "Most people are like, 'I totalled my car, I better go into rehab,'" Fried said. "These people are like, 'I totalled it, I'll get a new one, or I'll drive the Porsche today.'"

Several of the patients I spoke with complained that Wonderland affords unfair privileges to its wealthiest or most famous residents. Mike, a commercial real-estate broker and recovering cocaine addict who was an outpatient at Wonderland in January, 2007, described the hoopla surrounding a celebrity client—paparazzi circling the property, spectators at Wonderland's regular Thursday-night A.A. meeting. "To have a little entourage with you in rehab is . . . it was crazy," he said. "The driver sat outside. The publicist hung out with the driver or the personal assistant. People were in and out and coming and going. It was chaos."

During Lindsay Lohan's thirty-day sojourn at Wonderland, her many comings and goings perplexed the tabloid media. There she was in the lobby of her apartment building, on the set of her film "I Know Who Killed Me," taking her SL500 to Beverly Hills Mercedes to be serviced. "Does the treatment involve the attending of Mad Tea Parties and the chasing of white rabbits? Maybe for Lindsay, but not for anyone else in residence," one blogger wrote. "I even had that conversation with Howard," Mike told me. "I said, 'Well, I think some people are a little bothered that their program and their stay at Wonderland is being negatively im-



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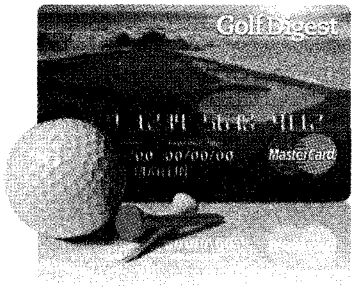

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pacted by this craziness and why rules don't apply to her that apply to us. I mean, there is some resentment building up.' And he said, 'You know what, Mike, I hear you, but we have to cater our program and our treatment center to each individual to make it work for them. Because if we didn't do that for this individual, she would have been gone on Day One.'"

The following Monday, after an art-therapy class in which clients painted raw wooden birdhouses and trimmed them with pompoms and pipe cleaners, the objective being to "create a home" for themselves (Max: "What's the sobriety angle on this?"), the group gathered to celebrate the third "sober birthday" of Susan, the E.M.T.-certified health-services coördinator responsible for distributing client "meds," with a round of singing and a Key-lime pie decorated with candles.

The previous day, Greta, the nineties-era singer, had been allowed to leave the center to perform the national anthem at a sporting event. (For any off-site business, Wonderland supplies residents with "sober companions"—Wonderland employees who are usually introduced as a friend or a cousin from out of town.) It had been a month since the A.A. meeting at which Samuels first met Greta. Her hair, formerly unkempt and mousy, was now layered into a modern mullet and dyed a variegated blond and brown. Her nails were painted in a punk-rock French manicure: blue with black tips. (The staff at Wonderland had arranged for her to have her hair colored, and had also driven her to get her guitars out of the pawnshop.)

"How was it yesterday, singing sober?" someone from across the table asked.

"Ah, dude, it was really amazing," Greta said. "It was the first time ever. Once, I had ninety days and I booked at the Knitting Factory on a Wednesday, which is, like, when no one is there, and I showed up and there was, like, thirty people there to see me. I was like, 'Who are all these fucking people?' . . . I thought, Oh. My. God. So I went and did a shot of vodka." The discussion came to a halt when Susan materialized at Greta's side.

"You need to come take your meds," she told Greta. Though its residential-rehab license stipulates that Wonderland's staff cannot administer medication, they watch to make sure the patient swallows it. Nearly all of the Wonderland clients are on some type of medication, whether for detoxification (such as Suboxone, for opiate withdrawal) or to treat an underlying psychiatric disorder (Zoloft for depression, Klonopin for anxiety).

"I can't take them without having something to eat," Greta replied.

"You didn't come at breakfast."

"I know, but I was in the shower, and then I was late for Group."

"You were late yesterday. After you finish eating, I need you to come take them." Susan was calm but firm.

"This attitude isn't making me want to do it," Greta said.

"But it's also, like, the ninth time, since you got here, that I've had to remind you. . . ."

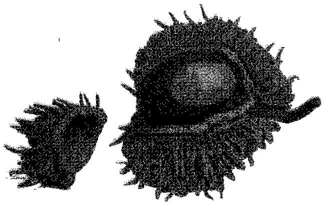
"O.K., but the attitude is not helping me."

"Well, it's getting a little bit old. I'll do the best I can to help you, but it's getting to the point where it's your place to remember." Susan walked away, the keys to the medication storage room jingling from her belt.

"You all right?" a lunch companion asked Greta.

"It's all right. She's right," Greta conceded. "It's just the attitude; it's always like that."

In August, Wonderland celebrated its second anniversary. The center has treated approximately two hundred and forty clients and employs an "alumni coördinator" who keeps up with them: sending cards for sober birthdays, tracking changes in address. He does not, however, track Wonderland's success rate. This may be because residential treatment programs have abysmally low rates of success—from about ten per cent to about thirty per cent, depending on where you get your statistics. Or it may be because Wonderland is still so



new that any statistics would be meaningless. Dr. Steven Jacobs, an internist and addiction specialist who has served as a medical consultant to Wonderland, told me, "Twenty-five years ago, when I first started, the notion was that if you stayed abstinent for two years, you would have a ninety per cent chance of staying clean and sober. Now the disease is thought to be more pernicious. It isn't until a person has had about five years that we think it's really likely he'll have a lifetime success of staying sober, from a scientific point of view."

Even established clinics don't offer much in the way of useful statistics. "Do we know what our relapse rate is? No," Betty Ford's John Schwarzlose said. "We know that our physicians and dentists do well, at about an eighty per cent success rate"—these doctors, who are monitored for five years after completing treatment, must pass random urinalysis tests or lose their license, so the incentive to stay sober is high—"but to give you a percentage would just be pulling it out of the air." Hazelden, which claims a success rate of between fifty-three and fifty-six per cent, tracks the abstinence of its patients for only one year.

On the Saturday morning after the Fourth of July, I met Samuels in the small guesthouse where he sees his private clients. His gray hair had recently been cropped close, and he was doing the "Master Cleanse," which meant he had consumed nothing but lemon juice, cayenne pepper, maple syrup, and water for five days. "I like doing it, because I'm sort of an extremist, you know? I think it builds your sense that you can do anything you set your mind to," he said. Samuels's wife, Gabrielle, could be glimpsed through the window in a maroon bikini with blue trim, sunning herself alongside the extra-wide lap pool in the back yard. "Success rates are bullshit," Samuels told me. "The first time somebody goes to treatment, yes, the success rate is low . . . but I failed after my first treatment, O.K.? So does that mean I'm a failure?" The ringing of his office phone interrupted him. It was one of Samuels's regular clients, an actor and former cocaine addict in his late thirties who, while on location, had cheated on his wife with his twenty-three-year-old co-star. Samuels counselled him for several minutes; I petted Hank and June, the collie-Lab-German-shepherd mixes who had left their olfactory imprint on the office. "I think without question you're a good *person*," Samuels was saying, stressing his syllables with care, "but you have character *defects*, and you have self-destructive *aspects*, that, you know, you're not in control of yet. . . ."

When he hung up, I returned to the question of recovery. "It really is about the willingness of the client," he said. "That's going to be the key to long-term success. I'm not a believer that treatment centers save people's lives. I think if you've got a really good treatment center you can go a long way toward helping a person, but at the end of the day it's not about the treatment center. It's about the individual, and about whether or not they're at that place to change."

The Wonderland Center recently underwent an organizational overhaul—several employees were fired, including Bernadine Fried. Samuels and Spanswick were able to terminate her because together they formed two-thirds of the board. (Alex Shohet was let go last April; Shohet and Fried, who still own a 49.5 per cent share of the company, are planning to seek an injunction to reverse the takeover of Wonderland by Samuels and Spanswick.) "I wanted a new start," Samuels said simply, referring to the changes. Samuels and Spanswick now have ambitious plans for Wonderland's expansion, the first step of which is to open an outpost in New York City. They imagine that New York clients will appreciate a program that allows them to receive treatment while continuing to work. From there, the partners plan to move on to additional cities, by acquiring existing treatment centers and remaking them according to the Wonderland model. Samuels considers rehab a recession-proof business. "We're looking to expand the sober community," Samuels said. "To get the message out that it's cool to be sober, that your life isn't going to be a drag, that you can kick ass and have an amazing life—you can take over the world." ♦

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Amanda Fortini answers readers' questions.

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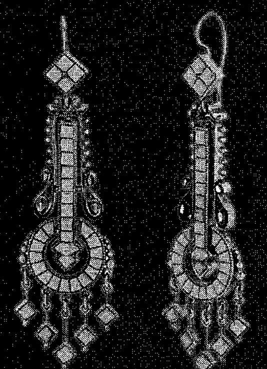
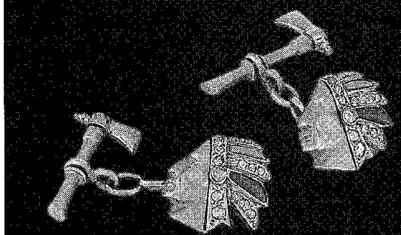
Turquoise & Gold, c. 1875





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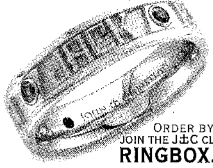

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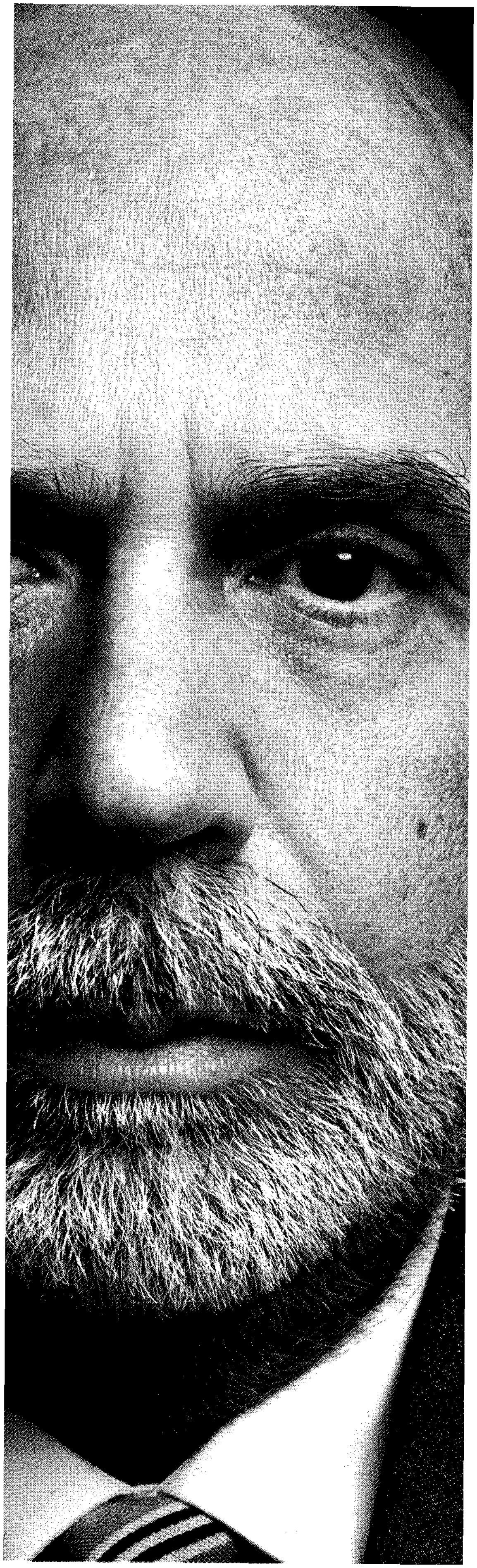


A REPORTER AT LARGE

ANATOMY OF A MELTDOWN

Ben Bernanke and the financial crisis.

BY JOHN CASSIDY

Some are born radical. Some are made radical. And some have radicalism thrust upon them. That is the way with Ben Bernanke, as he struggles to rescue the American financial system from collapse. Early every morning, weekends included, Bernanke arrives at the headquarters of the Federal Reserve, an austere white marble pile on Constitution Avenue in Foggy Bottom. The Fed, which is as hushed inside as a mausoleum, is a place of establishment reserve. Its echoing hallways are lined with sombre paintings. The office occupied by Bernanke, a soft-spoken fifty-four-year-old former professor, has high ceilings, several shelves of economics textbooks, and, on the desk, a black Bloomberg terminal. On a shelf in a nearby closet sits a scruffy gym bag, which in calmer days Bernanke took to the Fed gym, where he played pickup basketball with his staffers.

At Princeton, where Bernanke taught economics for many years, he was known for his retiring manner and his statistics-laden research on the Great Depression. For more than a year after he was appointed by President George W. Bush to chair the Fed, in February, 2006, he faithfully upheld the policies of his immediate predecessor, the charismatic free-market conservative Alan Greenspan, and he adhered to the central bank's formal mandates: controlling inflation and maintaining employment. But since the market for subprime mortgages collapsed, in the summer of 2007, the growing financial crisis has forced Bernanke to intervene on Wall Street in ways never before contemplated by the Fed. He has slashed interest rates, established new lending programs, extended hundreds of billions of dollars to troubled financial firms, bought debt issued by industrial corporations such as General Electric, and even taken distressed mortgage assets onto the Fed's books. (In March, to facilitate the takeover by J. P. Morgan of Bear Stearns, a Wall Street investment bank that was facing bankruptcy, the Fed acquired twenty-nine billion dollars' worth of Bear Stearns's bad mortgage assets.) These moves hardly amount to a Marxist revolution, but, in the eyes of many economists, including supporters and opponents of the measures, they represent a watershed in American economic and political history. Ben Bernanke, who seemed to have been selected as much for his predictability as for his economic expertise, is now engaged in the boldest use of the Fed's authority since its inception, in 1913.

Bernanke, working closely with Henry (Hank) Paulson, the Treasury Secretary, a voluble former investment banker, was determined to keep the financial sector operating long enough so that it could repair itself—a policy that he and his Fed colleagues referred to as the "finger-in-the-dike" strategy. As recently as Labor Day, he believed that the strategy was working. The credit markets remained open; the economy was still expanding, if slowly; oil prices were dropping; and there were tentative signs that house prices were stabilizing. "A lot can still go wrong, but at least I can see a path that will bring us out of this entire episode relatively intact," he told a visitor to his office in August.

By mid-September, however, the outlook was much grimmer. On Monday, September 15th, Lehman Brothers, another Wall Street investment bank that had made bad bets on subprime mortgage securities, filed for bankruptcy protection, after Bernanke, Paulson, and the bank's senior executives failed to find a way to save it or to sell it to a healthier firm. During the next forty-eight hours, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell nearly four hundred points; Bank of America announced its purchase of Merrill Lynch; and American International Group, the country's biggest insurance company, began talks with the New York Fed about a possible rescue. Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, the two wealthiest investment banks on Wall Street, were also in trouble. Their stock prices tumbled as rumors circulated that they were having difficulty borrowing money. "Both Goldman and Morgan were having a run on the bank," a senior Wall Street executive told me. "People started withdrawing their balances. Counterparties started insisting that they post more collateral."

The Fed talked with Wall Street executives about creating a "lifeline" for Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, which would have given the firms greater access to central-bank funds. But Bernanke decided that even more drastic action was needed. On Wednesday, September 17th, a day after the Fed agreed to inject eighty-five billion dollars of taxpayers' money into A.I.G., Bernanke asked Paulson to accompany him to Capitol Hill and make the case for a congressional bailout of the entire banking industry. "We can't keep doing this," Bernanke told Paulson. "Both because we at the Fed don't have the necessary resources and for reasons of democratic legitimacy, it's important that the Congress come in and take control of the situation."

Paulson agreed. A bailout ran counter to the Bush Administration's free-market principles and to his own belief that reckless behavior should not be rewarded, but he had worked on Wall Street for thirty-two years, most recently as the C.E.O. of Goldman Sachs, and had never seen a financial crisis of this magnitude. He had come to respect Bernanke's judgment, and he shared his conviction that, in an emer-

Bernanke says that he was "mistaken early on in saying that the subprime crisis would be contained." Photograph by Platon.

gency, pragmatism trumps ideology. The next day, the men decided, they would go see President Bush.

On October 3rd, Congress passed an amended bailout bill, giving the Secretary of the Treasury broad authority to purchase from banks up to seven hundred billion dollars in mortgage assets, but the turmoil on Wall Street continued. Between October 6th and October 10th, the Dow suffered its worst week in a hundred years, falling eighteen per cent. As the selling spread to overseas markets, the Fed's failure to save Lehman Brothers was roundly condemned. Christine Lagarde, the French finance minister, described it as a "horrendous" error that threatened the global financial system. Richard Portes, an economist at the London Business School, wrote in the *Financial Times*, "The U.S. authorities' decision to let Lehman Brothers fail will be severely criticised by financial historians—the next generation of Bernankes." Even Alan Blinder, an old friend and former colleague of Bernanke's in the economics department at Princeton, who served as vice-chairman of the Fed from 1994 to 1996, was critical. "Maybe there were arguments on either side before the decision," he told me. "After the fact, it is extremely clear that everything fell apart on the day Lehman went under."

The most serious charge against Bernanke and Paulson is that their response to the crisis has been ad hoc and contradictory: they rescued Bear Stearns but allowed Lehman Brothers to fail; for months, they dismissed the danger from the subprime crisis and then suddenly announced that it was grave enough to justify a huge bailout; they said they needed seven hundred billion dollars to buy up distressed mortgage securities and then, in October, used the money to purchase stock in banks instead. Summing up the widespread frustration with Bernanke, Dean Baker, the co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a liberal think tank in Washington, told me, "He was behind the curve at every stage of the story. He didn't see the housing bubble until after it burst. Until as late as this summer, he downplayed all the risks involved. In terms of policy, he has not presented a clear view. On a number of occasions, he has pointed in one direction and then turned around and acted differently. I would be surprised if Obama wanted to reappoint him when his term ends"—in January, 2010.

Bernanke and Paulson's reversals have been deeply unsettling, perhaps especially so for the millions of Americans who have lost jobs or defaulted on mortgages so far this year. And yet, for the past year and a half, the government has confronted a financial debacle of unprecedented size and complexity. "Everyone knew there were issues and potential problems," John Mack, the chairman and chief executive of Morgan Stanley, told me. "Nobody knew the enormity of it, how global it was and how deep it was." In responding to the crisis, Bernanke has effectively transformed the Fed into an Atlas for the financial sector, extending more than $1.5 trillion in loans to troubled banks and investment firms, and providing financial guarantees worth roughly another $1.5 trillion, making it global capitalism's lender of first and last (and sometimes only) resort.

"Under Ben's leadership, we have felt compelled to create a new playbook for the Fed," Kevin Warsh, a Fed governor who has worked closely with Bernanke, told me. "The circumstances of the last year caused us to cross more lines than this institution has crossed in the previous seventy years." Paul Krugman, the *Times* columnist, a former colleague of Bernanke's at Princeton, and the winner of this year's Nobel Prize in Economics, said, "I don't think any other central banker in the world would have done as much by way of expanding credit, putting the Fed into unconventional assets, and so on. Now, you might say that it all hasn't been enough. But I guess I think that's more a reflection of the limits to the Fed's power than of Bernanke getting it wrong. And things could have been much worse."

Six and a half years ago, Bernanke was a little-known professor living in Montgomery Township, a hamlet near Princeton. Long hours, enormous stress, and constant criticism have left him looking pale and drawn. "Ben is a very decent and sincere person," Richard Fisher, the president of the Dallas Fed, told me. "The question is, Is that an asset or a liability in his job? If he were six feet seven, like Paul Volcker"—a former Fed chairman—"that would be a big advantage. If he was a tough S.O.B., like Jerry Corrigan"—a former head of the New York Fed, who successfully managed a previous financial crisis, in 1987—"that would be a big advantage. But you make do with what you have—a prodigious brain, a tremendous knowledge of past financial crises, and a personality that is above reproach. And you surround yourself with good people and use their expertise."

As Fed chairman, Bernanke inherited an unprecedented housing bubble and an unsustainable borrowing spree. The collapse of these phenomena occurred with astonishing speed and violence. The only precursor for the current financial crisis is the Great Depression, but even that isn't a very good comparison. In the nineteen-thirties, the financial system was much less sophisticated and interconnected. In dealing with problems affecting arcane new financial products, including "collateralized debt obligations," "credit default swaps," and "tri-party repos," Bernanke and his colleagues have had to become expert in market transactions of baffling intricacy.

Bernanke grew up in Dillon, South Carolina, an agricultural town just across the state line from North Carolina, where, in 1941, his paternal grandfather, Jonas Bernanke, a Jewish immigrant from Austria, founded the Jay Bee Drugstore, subsequently operated by Ben's father and an uncle. The eldest of three siblings, Bernanke learned to read in kindergarten and skipped first grade. When he was eleven, he won the state spelling championship and went to Washington to compete in the National Spelling Bee. He made it to the second round, but stumbled on the word "edelweiss," an Alpine flower featured in "The Sound of Music." He hadn't seen the movie, because Dillon didn't have a movie theatre. Had he spelled the word correctly and won the competition, Bernanke tells friends, he would have appeared on "The Ed Sullivan Show," which was his dream.

In high school, Bernanke taught himself calculus, submitted eleven entries to a state poetry contest, and played alto saxophone in the marching band. During his junior year, he scored 1590 out of 1600 on his S.A.T.s—the highest score in South Carolina that year—and the state awarded him a trip to Europe. In the fall of 1971, he entered Harvard, where he wrote a prize-winning senior thesis on the economic effects of U.S. energy policy. After graduating, he enrolled at M.I.T., whose Ph.D. program in economics was rated the best in the country. His doctoral thesis was a dense mathematical treatise on the causes of economic fluctuations. He accepted a job at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, where Anna Friedmann, a Wellesley senior whom Bernanke married the weekend after she graduated, had been admitted into the master's program in Spanish.

The couple lived in Northern California for six years, until Princeton awarded Bernanke, then just thirty-one, a tenured position. Settling in Montgomery Township, they brought up two children: Joel, who is now twenty-five and applying to medical school, and Alyssa, a twenty-two-year-old student at St. John's College. By 2001, Bernanke was the editor of the *American Economic Review* and the co-author, with Robert Frank, of "Principles of Economics," a well-regarded college textbook. His scholarly interests ranged from abstruse matters such as the theoretical merits of setting a formal inflation target to historical questions, including the causes of the Great Depression. Even when Bernanke was writing about historical events, much of his scholarship was couched in impenetrable technical language. "I always thought that Ben would stay in academia," Mark Gertler, an economist at New York University who has known Bernanke well since 1979, told me. "But two things happened."

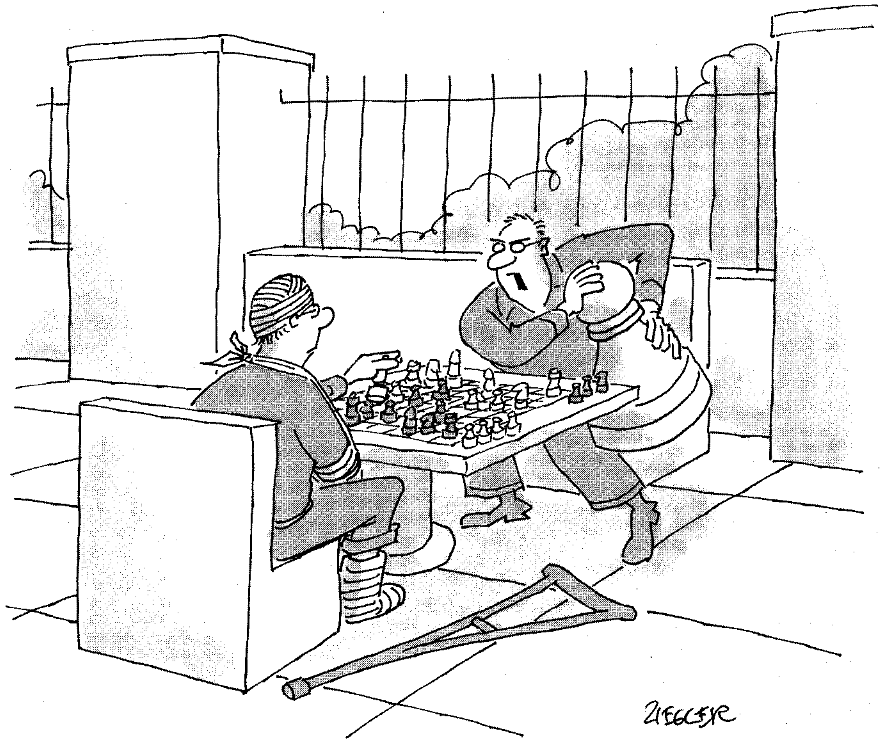
In 1996, Bernanke became chairman of the Princeton economics department, a job many professors regard as a dull administrative diversion from their real work. Bernanke, however, embraced the chairmanship, staying on for two three-year terms. Under his stewardship, the department launched new programs and hired leading scholars, among them Paul Krugman, whom Bernanke wooed personally. Bernanke also bridged a long-standing departmental divide between theorists and applied researchers, in part by raising enough money so that the two sides could coexist peaceably, and by engaging in diplomacy. "Ben is very good at respecting minority opinion and giving people the feeling they have been heard in the debate even if they get outvoted," Alan Blinder said.

The other event that changed Bernanke's career occurred in the summer of 1999, at the height of the Internet stock boom, when he and Gertler were invited to present a paper at an annual policy conference organized by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. The topic of the conference—which takes place at a resort in Jackson Hole, Wyoming—was New Challenges for Monetary Policy. Then, as now, there was vigorous debate among economists about whether central banks should raise interest rates to counter speculative bubbles. By increasing the cost of borrowing, the Fed, at least in theory, can restrain speculative activity and prevent the prices of assets such as stocks and real estate from rising excessively.

Bernanke and Gertler argued that the Fed should ignore bubbles and stick to its traditional policy of controlling inflation. If a bubble inflated and burst of its own accord, they said, the Fed could always bring down rates to alleviate damage to the broader economy. To support their case, they presented a series of computer simulations, which appeared to show that a policy of targeting inflation stabilized the economy more effectively than one that targeted bubbles. The presentation got a mixed reception. Henry Kaufman, a well-known Wall Street economist, said that it would be irresponsible for the Fed to ignore rampant speculation. Rudi Dornbusch, an M.I.T. professor (who has since died), pointed out that Bernanke and Gertler had overlooked the possibility that credit could dry up after a bubble burst, and that such a development could have serious effects on the economy. But Greenspan was more supportive. "He didn't say anything during the session," Gertler recalled. "But after it was over he walked by and said, as quietly as he could, 'You know, I agree with you.' That had us in seventh heaven."

In December, 1996, Greenspan had warned that investors could fall victim to "irrational exuberance." Subsequently, though, he had adopted a policy of benign neglect toward the stock market, ignoring warnings that a bubble in technology and Internet stocks had developed. The paper by Bernanke and Gertler provided theoretical support for Greenspan's stance, and it received a good deal of publicity, something neither of its authors had previously experienced. "Ben was a bit taken aback by the public attention," Gertler said. "*The Economist* attacked us viciously."

In 2002, when the Bush Administra-



"Do you want to reconsider that move—or shall I bring back the big pawn?"

tion was looking to fill two vacant governorships at the Fed—there are seven in all—Glenn Hubbard, who is the dean of Columbia Business School and who was then the chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, proposed Bernanke. "We needed a strong economist who understood the financial markets, and Ben had expertise in that area," Hubbard recalled. "He is also an extremely nice person. In terms of getting on with people, he is very affable, and I thought that would help him, too."

Although the Fed is an independent agency, it is subject to congressional oversight, and Presidents typically appoint people who are sympathetic to their world view. Hubbard knew little about Bernanke's politics. "I was aware he was an economic conservative, but I didn't know whether he was a Republican," Hubbard said. Robert Frank, a liberally inclined economist at Cornell and Bernanke's co-author on "Principles of Economics," believed that Bernanke was a Democrat. When the White House announced that it was nominating Bernanke to be a Fed governor, Frank was shocked. "I asked Ben, 'Why is Bush appointing a Democrat?' " Frank told me. "He said, 'Well, I'm not a Democrat.' " In writing their book, Frank was impressed not only by Bernanke's openness to opposing views but also by his wry humor and his lack of ego. "In most situations, he is the smartest guy in the room, but he doesn't seem too eager to show that," Frank said.

When Bernanke joined the Fed, it was struggling to revive the economy after the Nasdaq collapse of 2000-01 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Between September, 2001, and June, 2003, Greenspan and his colleagues cut the federal funds rate—the key interest rate under the Fed's control—from 3.5 per cent to one per cent, its lowest level since the nineteen-fifties. Cutting interest rates during an economic downturn is standard policy at the Fed; lower borrowing costs encourage households and businesses to spend more. But Greenspan's rate reductions were unusual in both their scale and their longevity. The Fed didn't reverse course until the summer of 2004, and even then it moved slowly, raising the federal funds rate in quarter-point increments.

With cheap financing readily available, a housing boom developed. Families bought homes they couldn't have afforded at higher interest rates; speculators bought properties to flip; people with modest incomes or poor credit took out mortgages designed for marginal buyers, such as subprime loans, interest-only loans, and "Alt-A" loans. On Wall Street, a huge market evolved in subprime mortgage bonds—securities backed by payment streams from dozens or hundreds of individual subprime mortgages. Banks and other mortgage lenders relaxed their credit standards, knowing that many of the loans they issued would be bundled into mortgage securities and sold to investors.

"The Fed's easy-money policy put a lot of the wind at the back of some of the transactions in the housing market and elsewhere that we are now suffering from," Glenn Hubbard told me. Before leaving government, in 2003, Hubbard argued in White House meetings that the Fed needed to start raising rates. "It was particularly striking for the Fed to maintain an accommodative policy after the 2003 tax cut, which gave another boost to the economy," Hubbard said. "That was a significant error."

Greenspan dominated the Federal Open Market Committee (F.O.M.C.), which sets the federal funds rate, but Bernanke explained and defended the Fed's actions to other economists and to the public. In October, 2002, a few months after joining the Fed, he gave a speech to the National Association for Business Economics, in which he said, "First, the Fed cannot reliably identify bubbles in asset prices. Second, even if it could identify bubbles, monetary policy is far too blunt a tool for effective use against them." In other words, it is difficult to distinguish a rise in asset prices that is justified by a strong economy from one based merely on speculation, and raising rates in order to puncture a bubble can bring on a recession. Greenspan had made essentially this argument during the dot-com era and reiterated it during the real-estate boom. (As late as 2004, Greenspan said that a national housing bubble was unlikely.)

As house prices soared, many Americans took out home-equity loans to finance their spending. The personal savings rate dipped below zero, and the trade deficit, which the United States financed by borrowing heavily from abroad, expanded greatly. Some experts warned that the economy was on an unsustainable course; Bernanke disagreed. In a much discussed speech in March, 2005, he argued that the main source of imbalance in the global economy was not excess spending at home but, rather, excess saving in China and other developing countries, where consumption was artificially low.

LET'S GO, JETS!
Dd

"If I don't go off-message every once in a while, people will start to think I'm a nut."

Lax American policy was helping to mop up a "global savings glut."

"Bernanke provided the intellectual justification for the Fed's hands-off approach to asset bubbles," Stephen S. Roach, the chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia, who was among the economists urging the Fed to adjust its policy, told me. "He also played a key role in the development of the 'global savings glut' theory, which the Fed used as a very convenient excuse to say we are doing the world a big favor in maintaining demand. In retrospect, we didn't have a global savings glut—we had an American consumption glut. In both of those cases, Bernanke was complicit in massive policy blunders on the part of the Fed."

Another expert who dissented from the Greenspan-Bernanke line was William White, the former economics adviser at the Bank for International Settlements, a publicly funded organization based in Basel, Switzerland, which serves as a central bank for central banks. In 2003, White and a colleague, Claudio Borio, attended the annual conference in Jackson Hole, where they argued that policymakers needed to take greater account of asset prices and credit expansion in setting interest rates, and that if a bubble appeared to be developing they ought to "lean against the wind"—raise rates. The audience, which included Greenspan and Bernanke, responded coolly. "Ben Bernanke really believes that it is impossible to lean against the wind on the way up and that it is possible to clean up the mess afterwards," White told me recently. "Both of these propositions are unproven."

Between 2004 and 2007, White and his colleagues continued to warn about the global credit boom, but they were largely ignored in the United States. "In the field of economics, American academics have such a large reputation that they sweep all before them," White said. "If you add to that the personal reputation of the Maestro"—Greenspan—"it was very difficult for anybody else to come in and say there are problems building."

"Oh, my God—I'm having an affair!"

• •

After years of theorizing about the economy, Bernanke revelled in the opportunity to participate in policy decisions, though he rarely challenged Greenspan. "He wouldn't have gotten into that club if he didn't go along," Douglas Cliggott, the chief investment officer at Dover Investment Management, a mutual-fund firm, told me. "Mr. Greenspan ran a tight ship, and he didn't fancy people spouting off with their own views." In January, 2005, Bernanke gave a speech at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association, in which he reflected on his transition from teaching: "The biggest downside of my current job is that I have to wear a suit to work. Wearing uncomfortable clothes on purpose is an example of what former Princeton hockey player and Nobel Prize winner Michael Spence taught economists to call 'signalling.' You have to do it to show that you take your official responsibilities seriously. My proposal that Fed governors should signal their commitment to public service by wearing Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts has so far gone unheeded."

A month later, Greg Mankiw, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, announced that he was returning to Harvard, and recommended Bernanke as his replacement. Al Hubbard, an Indiana businessman who headed the National Economic Council, which advises the President on economic policy, wasn't convinced that Bernanke was the right choice. "When you meet him, he comes over as incredibly quiet," Hubbard told me. "I wanted to make sure he was somebody who wouldn't be reluctant to engage in the economic arguments." After talking with Bernanke, Hubbard changed his mind. "He's actually very self-confident, and he's not intimidated by anybody," Hubbard said. "You could always count on him to speak up and give his opinion from an economic perspective."

In June, 2005, Bernanke was sworn in at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. One of his first tasks was to deliver a monthly economics briefing to the President and the Vice-President. After he and Hubbard sat down in the Oval Office, President Bush noticed that Bernanke was wearing light-tan socks under his dark suit. "Where did you get those socks, Ben?" he asked. "They don't match." Bernanke didn't falter. "I bought them at the Gap—three pairs for seven dollars," he replied. During the briefing, which lasted about forty-five minutes, the President mentioned the socks several times.

The following month, Hubbard's deputy, Keith Hennessey, suggested that the entire economics team wear tan socks to the briefing. Hubbard agreed to call Vice-President Cheney and ask him to wear tan socks, too. "So, a little later, we all go into the Oval Office, and we all show up in tan socks," Hubbard recalled. "The President looks at us and sees we are all wearing tan socks, and he says in a cool voice, 'Oh, very, very funny.' He turns to the Vice-President and says, 'Mr. Vice-President, what do you think of these guys in their tan socks?' Then the Vice-President shows him that he's wearing them, too. The President broke up."

As chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, Bernanke was expected to act as a public spokesman on economic matters. In August, 2005, after briefing President Bush at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, he met with the White House press corps. "Did the housing bubble come up at your meeting?" a reporter asked. "And how concerned are you about it?"

Bernanke affirmed that it had and said, "I think it is important to point out that house prices are being supported in very large part by very strong fundamentals. . . . We have lots of jobs, employment, high incomes, very low mortgage rates, growing population, and shortages of land and housing in many areas. And those supply-and-demand factors are a big reason why house prices have risen as much as they have."

By this time, the President's ambitious plans to partly privatize Social Security had been stymied by congressional opposition, and his plans to simplify the tax system appeared likely to meet a similar fate. Nevertheless, the White House economics team was searching for market-friendly policy proposals, and Bernanke was happy to contribute. On the flight from Crawford to Washington, D.C., he and Hennessey discussed replacing tax subsidies to employer-based health-insurance plans with a fixed tax credit or deduction that families could use to buy their own coverage. In Washington, they continued to develop the idea, which proved popular with economic conservatives, though some experts have said it would lead to a dramatic drop in employer-provided health plans. "It's what we proposed, and it's what John McCain proposed," Al Hubbard said. "If we can keep health care in the private sector, it is what eventually will happen. Ben and Keith are the guys who came up with it."

From the moment Bernanke went to work for Bush, he was seen as a likely successor to Greenspan, who was due to retire in January, 2006. Shortly after Labor Day, 2005, at Bush's request, Al Hubbard and Liza Wright, the White House personnel director, compiled a list of eight or ten candidates for the Fed chairmanship and interviewed several of them. The selection committee eventually settled on Bernanke. "An important part of the Fed job is bringing people along with you, on the F.O.M.C. and so on," Hubbard told me. "He had the right personality to do that. Plus, Ben is a very powerful thinker. We were impressed with his theories of the world and the way he thinks. He believes in free markets."

Some press reports have suggested that the public controversy over the abortive nomination to the Supreme Court of Harriet Miers, the White House counsel, helped Bernanke's chances, because it put pressure on the Administration to appoint a nonpartisan figure to the Fed. "That was never even discussed," Hubbard insisted to me. "We didn't take account of Harriet Miers or anything else. There was no politics involved." On October 24, 2005, President Bush nominated Bernanke as the fourteenth chairman of the Fed, saying, "He commands deep respect in the global financial community." After thanking the President, Bernanke said that if the Senate confirmed him his first priority would be "to maintain continuity with the policies and policy strategies established during the Greenspan years."

For more than a year, Bernanke kept his word. In the first half of 2006, the F.O.M.C. raised the federal funds rate in three quarter-point increments, to 5.25 per cent, and kept it there for the rest of the year. But cheap money was only part of Greenspan's legacy. He had also championed financial deregulation, resisting calls for tighter government oversight of burgeoning financial products, such as over-the-counter derivatives, and applauded the growth of subprime mortgages. "Where once more marginal applicants would simply have been denied credit, lenders are now able to quite efficiently judge the risks posed by individual applicants and to price that risk appropriately," Greenspan said in a 2005 speech.

Bernanke hadn't said much about regulation before being nominated as the Fed chairman. Once in office, he generally adhered to Greenspan's laissez-faire approach. In May, 2006, he rejected calls for direct regulation of hedge funds, saying that such a move would "stifle innovation." The following month, in a speech on bank supervision, he expressed support for allowing banks, rather than government officials, to determine how much risk they could take on, using complicated mathematical models of their own devising—a policy that had been in place for a number of years. "The ongoing work on this framework has already led large, complex banking organizations to improve their systems for identifying, measuring, and managing their risks," Bernanke said.

It is now evident that self-regulation failed. By extending mortgages to unqualified lenders and accumulating large inventories of subprime securities, banks and other financial institutions took on enormous risks, often without realizing it. Their mathematical models failed to alert them to potential perils. Regulators—including successive Fed chairmen—failed, too. "That was largely Greenspan, but Bernanke clearly shared an ideology of taking a hands-off approach," Stephen Roach, of Morgan Stanley Asia, said. "In retrospect, it is unconscionable that the Fed didn't really care about regulation, or didn't show any interest in it."

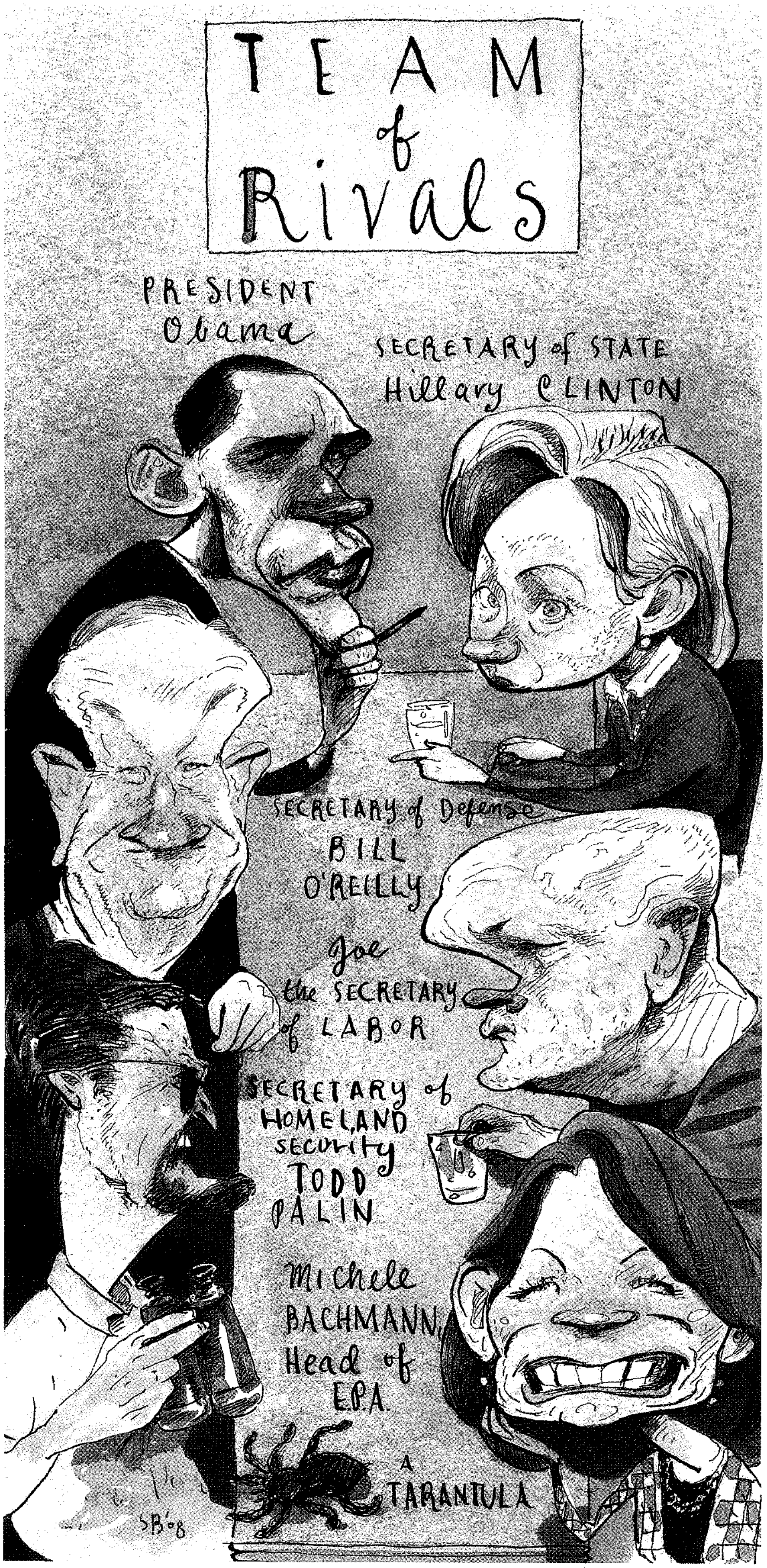
Bernanke was more concerned about inflation and unemployment, the Fed's traditional areas of focus, than he was about the growth of mortgage securities. "The U.S. economy appears to be making a transition from the rapid rate of expansion experienced over the preceding years to a more sustainable, average pace of growth," he told the Senate banking committee in February, 2007. By then, home prices in many parts of the country had begun to drop. At least two prominent economists—Nouriel Roubini, at N.Y.U., and Joseph Stiglitz, at Columbia—had warned that a nationwide housing slump could trigger a recession, but Bernanke and his colleagues thought this was unlikely. "You could think about Texas in the nineteen-eighties, when oil prices went down, or California in the nineteen-nineties, when the peace dividend hit the defense industry, but these were regional things," one Fed policymaker told me. "A national decline in house prices hadn't occurred since the nineteen-thirties."

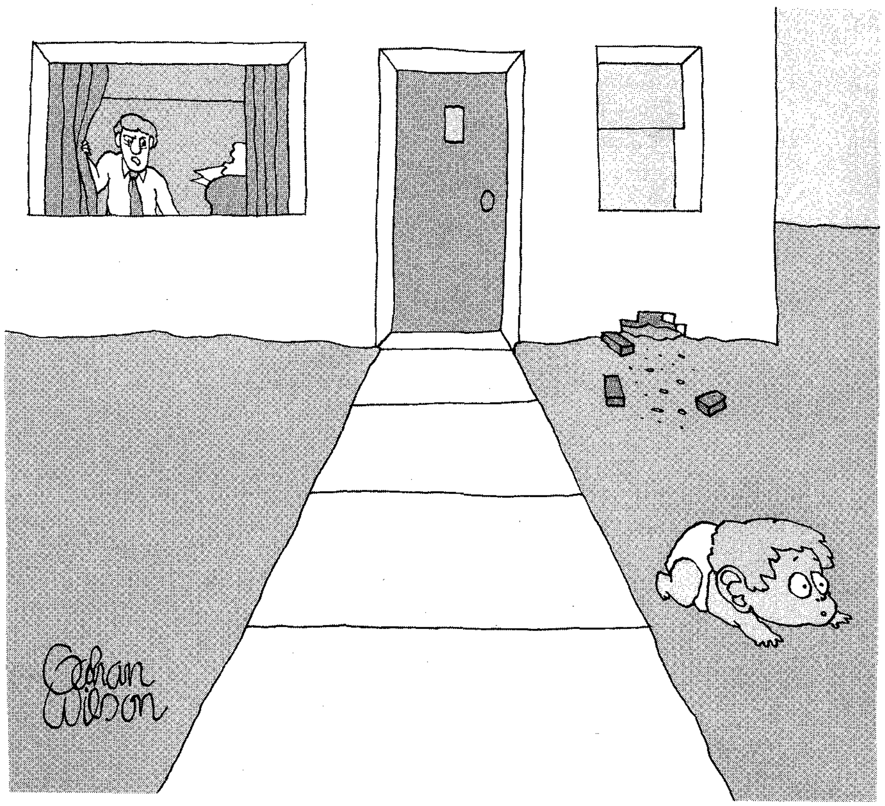
On February 28, 2007, Bernanke told the House budget committee that he didn't consider the housing downturn "as being a broad financial concern or a major factor in assessing the state of the economy." He maintained an upbeat tone over the next several months, during which two large subprime lenders, New Century Financial Corp. and American Home Mortgage, filed for bankruptcy, and the damage spread to Wall Street firms that had invested in subprime securities. On August 3rd, the day after American Home Mortgage announced that it was shutting down, the Dow fell almost three hundred points, and CNBC's Jim Cramer, in a four-minute rant that is still playing on YouTube, accused the Fed of being "asleep."

"Bernanke is being an academic," Cramer bellowed. "He has no idea how bad it is out there! . . . My people have been in this game for twenty-five years, and they are losing their jobs, and these firms are going to go out of business, and he's nuts! They're nuts! They know nothing!"

Four days later, the F.O.M.C. met, but left the federal funds rate unchanged. In a statement, the committee acknowledged the housing "correction" but said that its "predominant policy concern remains the risk that inflation will fail to moderate as expected." Looking back on this period, Bernanke told me, "I and others were mistaken early on in saying that the subprime crisis would be contained. The causal relationship between the housing problem and the broad financial system was very complex and difficult to predict." Relative to the fourteen trillion dollars in mortgage debt outstanding in the United States, the two-trillion-dollar subprime market seemed trivial. Moreover, internal Fed estimates of the total losses likely to be suffered on subprime

SKETCHBOOK BY STEVE BRODNER


TEAM of Rivals
PRESIDENT Obama
SECRETARY of STATE Hillary CLINTON
SECRETARY of Defense BILL O'REILLY
Joe the SECRETARY of LABOR
SECRETARY of HOMELAND security TODD PALIN
Michele BACHMANN, Head of EPA.
A TARANTULA
SB'08



"He's done it again!"

mortgages were roughly equivalent to a single day's movement in the stock market, hardly enough to spark a financial conflagration.

One of the supposed advantages of securitizing mortgages was that it allowed the risk of homeowners' defaulting on their mortgages to be transferred from banks to investors. However, as the market for mortgage securities deteriorated, many banks ended up accumulating big inventories of these assets, some of which they parked in off-balance-sheet vehicles called conduits. "We knew that banks were creating conduits," Don Kohn, the Fed's vice-chairman, told me. "I don't think we could have recognized the extent to which that could come back onto the banks' balance sheets when confidence in the underlying securities—the subprime loans—began to erode."

On August 9, 2007, the crisis escalated significantly after BNP Paribas, a major French bank, temporarily suspended withdrawals from three of its investment funds that had holdings of subprime securities, citing a "complete evaporation of liquidity in certain market segments of the U.S. securitization market." In other words, trading in the mortgage securities market had ceased, leaving many financial institutions short of cash and saddled with assets that they couldn't sell at any price. Stocks fell sharply on both sides of the Atlantic, and the following day Bernanke held a conference call with members of the F.O.M.C., during which they discussed reducing the interest rate at which the Fed lends to commercial banks—the "discount rate." Since the Fed was founded, it has had a "discount window," from which commercial banks may borrow as needed. In recent years, however, most banks had stopped using the window, because they could raise money more cheaply from investors and other banks.

The Fed decided to keep the discount rate at 6.25 per cent but issued a statement reminding banks that the discount window was open if they needed money. Seven days later, however, after more wild swings in the markets, the Fed voted to cut the discount rate by half a point, to 5.75 per cent. It declared that it was "prepared to act as needed to mitigate the adverse effects on the economy arising from the disruptions in financial markets."

Bernanke now realized that the subprime crisis posed a grave threat to some of the country's biggest financial institutions and that Greenspan-era policies were insufficient to contain it. In the third week of August, he made his second visit as head of the Fed to Jackson Hole, where he invited some of his senior colleagues to join him in a brainstorming session. "What's going on and what do we need to do?" he asked. "What tools have we got and what tools do we need?"

The participants included Don Kohn; Kevin Warsh; Brian Madigan, the head of monetary affairs at the Fed; Tim Geithner, the head of the New York Fed; and Bill Dudley, who runs the markets desk at the New York Fed. The men agreed that the financial system was facing what is known as a "liquidity crisis." Banks, fearful of lending money to financial institutions that might turn out to be in trouble, were starting to hoard their capital. If this situation persisted, businesses and consumers might be unable to obtain the loans they needed in order to spend money and keep the economy afloat.

Bernanke and his colleagues settled on a two-part approach to the crisis. (Geithner later dubbed it "the Bernanke doctrine.") First, to prevent the economy from stalling, the Fed would lower the federal funds rate modestly—by half a point in September and by a quarter point in October, to 4.5 per cent. This was standard Fed policy—trimming rates to head off an economic decline—but it didn't directly address the crisis of confidence afflicting the financial system. If banks wouldn't extend credit to one another, the Fed would have to act as a "lender of last resort"—a role it was authorized to perform under the 1913 Federal Reserve Act. However, borrowing from the Fed's discount window, its main tool for supplying banks with cash, not only meant paying a hefty interest rate but also signalled to competitors that the lender was having difficulty raising money. Moreover, many of the banks that had bought subprime securities and needed to lend dollars weren't in the United States.

Kohn proposed a potential solution.

Before the turn of the millennium, he recalled, worries about widespread computer failures had prompted many financial institutions to hoard capital. The Fed, determined to keep money flowing in the event of a crisis, had developed several ideas, including auctioning Fed loans and setting up currency swaps with central banks abroad, to enable cash-strapped foreign banks to lend in dollars. Y2K had transpired without incident, and none of the ideas had been tested. Kohn suggested that the Fed revisit them now.

Versions of the Y2K proposals became the second part of the Bernanke doctrine—its most radical component. Over fifteen months, beginning in August, 2007, the Fed, through various novel programs known by their initials, such as T.A.F., T.S.L.F., and P.D.C.F., lent more than a trillion dollars to dozens of institutions. One program, T.A.F., allowed banks and investment firms to compete in auctions for fixed amounts of Fed funding, while T.S.L.F. enabled firms to swap bad mortgage securities for safe Treasury bonds. The programs, which have received little public attention, were supposed to be temporary, but they have been greatly expanded and remain in effect. "It's a completely new set of liquidity tools that fit the new needs, given the turmoil in the financial markets," Kevin Warsh, the Fed governor, said. "We have basically substituted our balance sheet for the balance sheet of financial institutions, large and small, troubled and healthy, for a time. Without these credit facilities, things would have been a lot worse. We'd have a lot more banks needing to be resolved, unwound, or rescued, and we would have run out of buyers before we ran out of sellers."

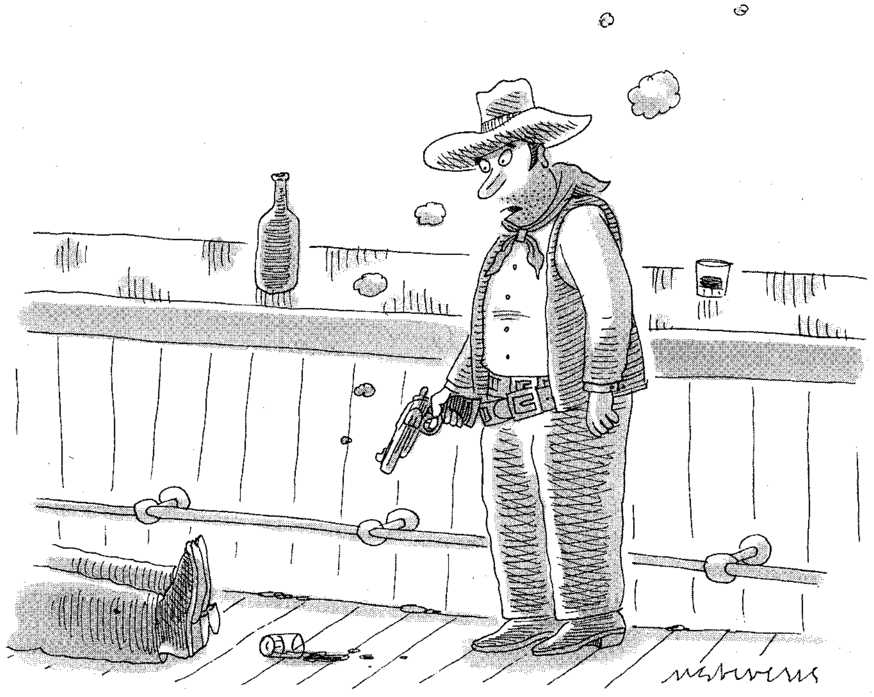
Richard Fisher, the head of the Dallas Fed, told me that the lending programs would be Bernanke's main legacy. He likened what the Fed has done to replacing a broken sprinkler system. "If the pipes are blocked up, the sprinkler heads don't receive any water, and the lawn turns brown and dies," he said. "In this case, the piping system had been broken and clogged. Just turning the faucet of the federal funds rate was insufficient to the challenges the Fed faced."

Although many people at the Fed worked on the details of the lending programs, Bernanke provided the impetus for their development. One of his first acts on taking office was to establish a financial-stability working group, which brought together economists, finance specialists, bank supervisors, and lawyers from different departments at the Fed to devise solutions to potential problems. As the subprime crisis unfolded, Bernanke met with the task force frequently to discuss the Fed's response, including how, in seeking to expand the scope of its activities, it could exploit obscure laws from the nineteen-thirties. "Ben is very good at making decisions—none of this waiting for the definitive academic paper before acting," said Geithner, who last week was reported to have been selected as Treasury Secretary by President-elect Barack Obama. "We've done some incredibly controversial, consequential things in a remarkably short period of time, and it's because he was willing to act quickly, with force and creativity."

Despite the rate cuts and lending programs, months passed without discernible improvements in the credit markets. During the summer and fall of 2007, the drop in house prices accelerated and the number of subprime delinquencies increased. In October, at a meeting in Washington of central bankers, executives, and economists, Allen Sinai, the chief economist at Decision Economics, Inc., asked Bernanke how he thought a central bank should manage the economic risks posed by a housing bubble. According to Sinai, Bernanke said that he had no way of knowing if there had been a housing bubble. "I realized then that he just didn't realize the scale of the problem," Sinai told me.

At F.O.M.C. meetings, some members compared the subprime debacle with the financial crisis of 1998, when the Fed organized a consortium of Wall Street firms to prevent the giant hedge fund Long Term Capital Management from collapsing. The markets had gyrated for a couple of months before recovering strongly, and the broader economy had been largely unaffected. "In September, it still looked good," Frederic Mishkin, a Columbia professor and a close friend of Bernanke, who served as a Fed governor from September, 2006, until August of this year, told me. "I thought it was going to be worse than 1998, but not much worse. I thought it was going to be over in a few months."

By the end of 2007, however, Bernanke was beginning to agree with some of the Fed's critics that interest rates needed to come down quickly. On January 4, 2008, the Labor Department reported that the unemployment rate had jumped from 4.7 per cent to five per



"*Sorry, I mis-shot.*"

cent, prompting a number of economists to say that the United States was on the brink of a recession. More banks and investment banks, including Citigroup, UBS, and Morgan Stanley, were reporting big losses—a development that particularly concerned Bernanke because of its historical overtones.

In an article Bernanke published in 1983, he showed how the Fed's failure in the early thirties to prevent banks from collapsing contributed to the depth and severity of the Great Depression—a finding that supported a theory first proposed in 1963 by the economists Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz. In November, 2002, shortly after joining the Fed, Bernanke appeared at a conference to mark Friedman's ninetieth birthday, and apologized for the Fed's Depression-era policies. "I would like to say to Milton and Anna: regarding the Great Depression, you're right; we did it," he said. "We're very sorry. But, thanks to you, we won't do it again."

On January 21, 2008, stock markets around the world fell sharply. The U.S. markets were closed for Martin Luther King Day, but at six o'clock that evening Bernanke convened a conference call of the F.O.M.C., which voted to cut the federal funds rate by three-quarters of a point, to 3.5 per cent. It was the first rate cut to occur between meetings since September, 2001, and the largest one-day reduction in the rate.

When the committee met on January 29th, it cut the federal funds rate by another half a point, to three per cent. In a month and a half, the Fed had shifted from a policy roughly balanced between fighting inflation and maintaining economic growth to one explicitly aimed at heading off a recession. To people inside the Fed, which is accustomed to moving at a stately pace, the change felt wrenching. "To move that far that fast was unprecedented," Frederic Mishkin, the Columbia professor and former Fed governor, said. "In our context, it's remarkable how fast we reacted." Some economists who worry about inflation were outraged by the rate cuts. "They're doing the same stupid things they did in the nineteen-seventies," Allan Meltzer, an economist at Carnegie Mellon, who has written a history of the Fed, told the *Times*. "They were always saying then that we're not going to let inflation get out of hand, that we're going to tackle it once the economy starts growing, but they never did."

Bernanke was frustrated by the attacks on his policies, especially when they came from academics whose work he respected. If he moved slowly, people on Wall Street accused him of timidity. If he brought rates down sharply, academic economists accused him of going soft on inflation.

As the financial crisis worsened, Bernanke worked more closely with Paulson, who, after becoming Treasury Secretary, in June, 2006, had established considerable autonomy in determining the Bush Administration's economic policy. The men appeared to have little in common. Bernanke was scholarly and reserved; Paulson, an English major who played offensive tackle for Dartmouth in the seventies, where he was known as the Hammer, was gregarious. Both, however, were political moderates who liked baseball. On his desk, Paulson, a Cubs fan, kept a copy of Bill James's "Historical Baseball Abstract," given to him by Bernanke, a former Red Sox fan who, since moving to the capital, had adopted the Washington Nationals.

Paulson and Bernanke met for breakfast every week and saw each other often at meetings of the President's Working Group on Financial Markets, which was led by Paulson and included senior officials from the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. Paulson frequently solicited Bernanke's advice. "I've been impressed with his pragmatism and how intellectually curious he is," Paulson told me in September. "He's willing to consider all ideas—conven-

SIGNING CEREMONY

Hotel Timeo, Taormina

The lilac peak of Etna dribbles pink,
Visibly seething in the politest way.
The shallow vodka cocktails that we sink
Here on the terrace at the close of day

Are spreading numb delight as they go down.
Their syrup mirrors the way lava flows:
It's just a show, it might take over town,
Sometimes the Cyclops, from his foxhole, throws

Rocks at Ulysses. But regard the lake
Of moonlight on the water, stretching east
Almost to Italy. The love we make
Tonight might be our last, but this, at least,

Is one romantic setting, am I right?
Cypresses draped in bougainvillea,
The massed petunias, the soft, warm night,
That streak of candy floss. And you, my star,

Still walking the stone alleys with the grace
Of forty years ago. Don't laugh at me
For saying dumb things. Just look at this place.
Time was more friend to us than enemy,

And soon enough this backdrop will go dark
Again. The spill of neon cream will cool,
The crater waiting years for the next spark
Of inspiration, since the only rule

Governing history is that it goes on:
There is no rhythm of events, they just
Succeed each other. Soon, we will be gone,
And that volcano, if and when it must,

Will flood the slope with lip gloss brought to boil
For other lovers who come here to spend
One last, late, slap-up week in suntan oil,
Their years together winding to an end.

With any luck, they'll see what we have seen:
Not just the picture postcard, but the splash
Of fire, and know this flowering soil has been
Made rich by an inheritance of ash.

Only because it's violent to the core
The world grows gardens. Out of earth we came,
To earth we shall return. But first, one more
Of these, delicious echoes of the flame

That drives the long life all should have, yet few
Are granted as we were. It wasn't fair?
Of course it wasn't. But which of us knew,
To start with, that the other would be there,

One step away, for all the time it took
To come this far and see a mountain cry
Hot tears, as if our names, signed in the book
Of marriage, were still burning in the sky?

—*Clive James*

tional and non-conventional—and he doesn't easily accept things that the bureaucracy comes up with."

In early March, 2008, stock in Bear Stearns, the investment bank and a major underwriter of subprime securities, fell steeply amid rumors that the firm was having trouble raising money in the overnight markets, on which, like all Wall Street firms, it depended to finance its huge trading positions. Many of the bank's clients began to withdraw their money, and many of its creditors demanded more collateral for their loans. In accommodating these requests, Bear was forced to draw on its cash reserves. By the afternoon of Thursday, March 13th, it reportedly had just two billion dollars left, not nearly enough to meet its obligations on Friday morning.

The Bernanke doctrine hadn't been designed to deal with such a situation. When Bernanke and Tim Geithner, the Fed's point man on Wall Street, first learned of Bear's predicament, they believed that the bank should be allowed to fail. For decades, the Fed had resisted lending to Wall Street firms for fear that it would encourage them to take excessive risks—a concern that economists refer to as "moral hazard." (The discount window is confined to commercial banks.) Bear wasn't one of Wall Street's biggest firms, and its demise seemed unlikely to lead to other failures. In the argot of central bankers, the bank didn't appear to present a "systemic risk."

By late Thursday night, after officials from the New York Fed and the S.E.C. visited Bear's offices to review its books, the assessment had changed. The company was a major participant in the "repurchase"—or "repo"—market, a little publicized but vitally important market in which banks raise cash on a short-term basis from mutual funds, hedge funds, insurance companies, and central banks. Every night, about $2.5 trillion turns over in the repo market. Most repo contracts roll over on a daily basis, and the lender can at any time return the collateral and demand its cash. This is precisely what many of Bear's lenders were doing—a process akin to the run by depositors on the Bailey Bros. Building & Loan in "It's a Wonderful Life."

Bear was also a big dealer in credit-default swaps (C.D.S.s), which are basically insurance contracts on bonds. In return for a premium, the seller of a swap promises to cover the full value of a given bond in the case of a default. Bear alone reportedly had more than five thousand institutional partners with whom it had traded C.D.S.s. If the bank were to default before the markets opened on Friday, the effect on the repo and swaps markets would be chaotic.

At two o'clock that morning, Geithner called Don Kohn and told him that he wasn't confident that the fallout from the bankruptcy of Bear Stearns could be contained. At about 4 A.M., Geithner spoke to Bernanke, who agreed that the Fed should intervene. The central bank decided to extend a twenty-eight-day loan to J. P. Morgan, Bear's clearing bank, which would pass the money on to Bear. In agreeing to make the loan, Bernanke relied on Section 13(3) of the Federal Reserve Act of 1932, which empowered the Fed to extend credit to financial institutions other than banks in "unusual and exigent circumstances."

News of the Fed's loan got Bear through trading on Friday, but Bernanke and Paulson were eager to find a permanent solution before the Asian markets opened on Sunday night. After a weekend of torturous negotiations, J. P. Morgan agreed to buy Bear Stearns for a knockdown price of two dollars a share, but only after the Fed agreed to take on Bear's twenty-nine-billion-dollar portfolio of subprime securities. "The further we got into it, the more we said, 'Oh, my God! We really need to address this problem,' " a senior Fed official recalled. "The problem wasn't the size of Bear Stearns—it wasn't the fact that some creditors would have borne losses. The problem was—people use the term 'too interconnected to fail.' That's not totally accurate, but it's close enough." In the repo market, for example, Bear Stearns had borrowed heavily from money-market mutual funds. "If Bear had failed," the senior official went on, "all these money-market mutual funds, instead of getting their money back on Monday morning, would have found themselves with all kinds of illiquid collateral, including C.D.O.s"—collateralized debt obligations—"and God knows what else. It would have caused a run on that entire market. That, in turn, would have made it impossible for other investment banks to fund themselves."

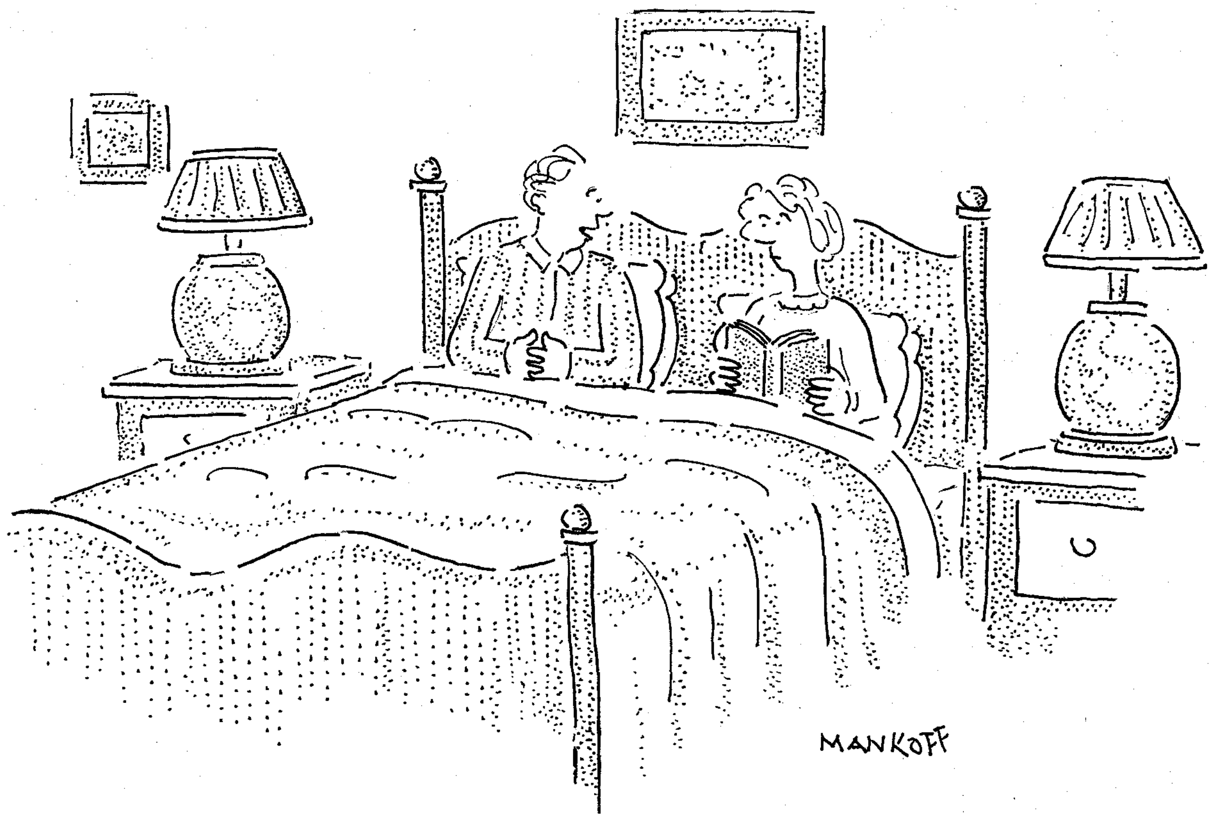
The day the Federal Reserve announced the rescue of Bear Stearns, it also cut the discount rate by another quarter point, and said that for a time it would open the discount window to twenty Wall Street firms—an unprecedented step. Fed officials felt they had little choice but to let investment banks borrow from the Fed on the same terms as commercial banks, even if it encouraged moral hazard. "We thought that even if we were successful in getting a solution that avoided a default for Bear, what was happening in the credit markets had too much momentum," a Fed official recalled. "We weren't going to be able to contain the damage simply by helping avoid a failure by Bear."

There is now wide agreement that Bernanke and his colleagues made the correct decision about Bear Stearns. If they had allowed the firm to file for bankruptcy, the financial panic that developed this fall would almost certainly have begun six months earlier. Instead, the markets settled for a while. "I think we did the right thing to try to preserve financial stability," Bernanke said. "That's our job. Yes, it's moral-hazard-inducing, but the right way to address this question is not to let institutions fail and have a financial meltdown. When the economy has recovered, or is on the way to recovery, that's the time to say, 'How can we fix the system so it doesn't happen again?' You want to put the fire out first and then worry about the fire code."

Nevertheless, after Bear Stearns's deal with J. P. Morgan was announced, Bernanke was attacked—by the media, by conservative economists, even by former Fed officials. In an editorial titled "Pushovers at the Fed," the *Wall Street Journal* declared that James Dimon, the chairman and chief executive of J. P. Morgan Chase, was "rolling over" the Fed and the Treasury. In early April, Paul Volcker, who chaired the Fed from 1979 to 1987, told the Economic Club of New York, "Sweeping powers have been exercised in a manner that is neither natural nor comfortable for a central bank." The Fed's job is to act as "custodian of the nation's money," Volcker went on, not to take "many billions of uncertain assets onto its own balance sheet."

Some of the criticisms were unfair. Bear Stearns's stockholders lost almost everything in the deal; James Cayne, the bank's chairman, lost almost a billion dollars. Still, even some Fed officials were uneasy about the acquisition of Bear Stearns's mortgage securities. Bernanke was sufficiently disturbed by Volcker's speech that he called to reassure him that the Fed's action had been an improvised response to a crisis rather than a template for future action.

In fact, it quickly became clear that an important precedent had been set: the Bernanke doctrine now included preventing the failure of major financial institutions. Since the collapse of the mortgage-securities market on Wall Street, in the summer of 2007, mortgage securitization had been left mainly in the hands



"By the way, what's your position on some-sex marriage?"

of two companies that operated under government charters to encourage homeownership: the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac). Like the Wall Street firms, Fannie and Freddie had suffered big losses on their vast loan portfolios, and many Wall Street analysts believed that the companies were on the verge of insolvency—an alarming prospect for the U.S. government. In order to finance their purchases of mortgages and mortgage bonds, Fannie and Freddie had issued $5.2 trillion in debt, and although they were technically private companies, their debt traded as if the government had guaranteed it. If the companies defaulted, the creditworthiness of the entire government would be called into question.

On Sunday, July 13th, Paulson told reporters outside the Treasury Department that he would request from Congress authority to invest an unspecified amount of taxpayers' money in Fannie and Freddie, which would remain shareholder-owned corporations. Fed officials said that until Congress agreed to Paulson's request the central bank would insure that the mortgage companies had sufficient cash by lending them money through the discount window. "We could recognize the systemic risk here," the Fed policymaker said. "Paulson had a plan to deal with that risk, and the system required that somebody be there while the plan was being implemented. We had the money to bridge to the new facility."

The plan to prop up Freddie and Fannie was no more warmly received than the Bear Stearns rescue package had been. "When I picked up my newspaper yesterday, I thought I woke up in France," Senator Jim Bunning, a Republican from Kentucky, said to Bernanke when he appeared before the Senate banking committee. "But no, it turned out it was socialism here in the United States of America." Two prominent Democratic economists, Lawrence Summers, the former Treasury Secretary, and Joseph Stiglitz, pointed out that the highly paid managers of the mortgage companies had been left in place, with few restrictions on how they operated. David Walker, the former director of the Government Accountability Office, said the rescue was a bad deal for the taxpayers.

Bernanke couldn't say so publicly, but he agreed with some of the critics. For years, the Fed had warned that Fannie and Freddie were squeezing out competitors and engaging in risky mortgage-lending practices. Bernanke would have liked to combine a rescue package with extensive reforms, but he realized that an overhaul of the companies was not politically feasible. Despite their financial problems, Fannie and Freddie still had many powerful allies in Congress, and Bernanke was determined that the plan be approved quickly, in order to restore confidence in the markets.

On August 21st, Bernanke departed for the annual Jackson Hole conference, which was to be devoted to the credit crunch. Over the course of three days, one speaker after another challenged aspects of the Fed's response, and, implicitly, of Bernanke's leadership. Allan Meltzer, of Carnegie Mellon, complained that the Fed had adopted an ad-hoc approach to bailing out troubled firms. Franklin Allen, a professor at the Wharton School, said that banks and investment firms could use the Fed's lending facilities as a means of concealing the state of their finances, and Willem Buiter, of the London School of Economics, accused the Fed of doing the financial industry's bidding, saying that the central bank had "internalized the fears, beliefs, and world views of Wall Street" and fallen victim to "cognitive regulatory capture."

Alan Blinder, Bernanke's friend and colleague from Princeton, defended him, arguing that the Fed had performed well in trying circumstances, and Martin Feldstein, a Harvard economist, said that it had "responded appropriately this year." But Feldstein added that the financial crisis was getting worse as housing prices continued to drop and homeowners to default. Perhaps the most suggestive comments were made by Yutaka Yamaguchi, a former deputy governor of the Bank of Japan, who, during the nineties, helped manage Japan's response to a ruinous speculative bust. The Bank of Japan began cutting interest rates in July, 1991, Yamaguchi recalled, but the financial system didn't stabilize until after the Japanese government bailed out a number of banks, a project that took almost a decade. The main lesson of the Japanese experience, he said, was the need for an "early and large-scale recapitalization of the financial system," using public money.

Throughout the discussion, Bernanke sat quietly and listened. He looked exhausted, and during one presentation he appeared to fall asleep. In his own speech, he defended the Fed's actions and argued that in the future the agency should be given more power to supervise big financial firms and opaque markets such as the repo market, and that a legal framework should be established to allow the government to intervene when they got into trouble. The speech suggested that Bernanke had adopted a more favorable view of regulation, but he made no mention of using monetary policy to deflate speculative bubbles or of recapitalizing the banking system.

Bernanke still believed that his finger-in-the-dike strategy was working. After all, in the second quarter of the year the Gross Domestic Product had expanded at an annualized rate of almost three per cent—and the unemployment rate was under six per cent. Commodity prices, including oil prices, had started to fall, which would ease inflation pressures. In Washington, over Labor Day weekend, Bernanke and Paulson met to discuss Fannie and Freddie. In the five weeks since Congress had given the Bush Administration broad authority to invest in the companies, the firms had tried unsuccessfully to raise capital on their own. Paulson and Bernanke decided that a government takeover was now the best option. In addition to removing the threat that Fannie and Freddie would default on their debts, it would enable the government to expand their lending activities and help stabilize house prices. "We have worked together for nine months, recognizing that the real-estate market is at the heart of our economic problems," Paulson told me later in September. "We said, 'If you wanted to get at that, how would you do it?' "

On Sunday, September 7th, Paulson announced that the government would place Fannie and Freddie in a "conservatorship," replacing their chief executives, taking an eighty-per-cent ownership stake in each of the companies, and providing them with access to as much as two hundred billion dollars in capital. The next day, the Dow closed up almost three hundred points. The billionaire Warren Buffett, whom Paulson had briefed on the move, said that it represented "exactly the right decision for the country." Even the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page, which for months had criticized Paulson and Bernanke, grudgingly endorsed the plan.

At the Treasury Department and the Fed, there was little opportunity to celebrate. On Tuesday, September 9th, stock in Lehman Brothers dropped by forty-five per cent, following reports that it had failed to secure billions of dollars in capital from a Korean bank. Lehman approached several potential buyers, including Bank of America and Barclays, the British bank. But by the end of the week it was running out of cash. On Friday evening, Geithner and Paulson summoned a group of senior Wall Street executives to the New York Fed and told them that the government wanted an "industry" solution to Lehman's problems. Talks continued through the weekend, but by Sunday afternoon both Bank of America and Barclays had bowed out, and word circulated that Lehman was preparing to file for bankruptcy.

Remarkably, once the potential bidders dropped out, Bernanke and Paulson never seriously considered mounting a government rescue of Lehman Brothers. Bernanke and other Fed officials say that they lacked the legal authority to save the bank. "There was no mechanism, there was no option, there was no set of rules, there was no funding to allow us to address that situation," Bernanke said last month, at the Economic Club of New York. "The Federal Reserve's ability to lend, which was used in the Bear Stearns case, for example, requires that adequate collateral be posted. . . . In this case, that was impossible—there simply wasn't enough collateral to support the lending. . . . We worked very hard, over one of those famous weekends, with not only some potential acquirers of Lehman but we also called together many of the leading C.E.O.s of the private sector in New York to try to come to a solution. We didn't find one." Bernanke insisted to me, too, that there was nothing he could have done to prevent Lehman from going under. "With Bear Stearns, with all the others, there was a point when someone said, 'Mr. Chairman, are we going to do this deal or not?' With Lehman, we were never anywhere near that point. There wasn't a decision to be made."

However, Bernanke and Paulson were undoubtedly sensitive to the charge, made in the wake of their efforts to salvage Bear Stearns, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac, that they were bailing out greedy and irresponsible financiers. For months, the Treasury and the Fed had urged Lehman's senior executives to raise more capital, which the bank had failed to do. Many analysts remain skeptical that the Fed couldn't have rescued Lehman. "It's really hard for me to accept that they couldn't have come up with something," Dean Baker, of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, said. "They've been doing things of dubious legal authority all year. Who would have sued them?"

At the time, a popular interpretation of Lehman Brothers' demise was that Bernanke and Paulson had finally drawn a line in the sand. ("We've re-established 'moral hazard,'" a source involved in the Lehman discussions told the *Wall Street Journal.*) But less than forty-eight hours later the Fed agreed to extend up to eighty-five billion dollars to A.I.G., a firm that had possibly acted even more irresponsibly. One difference was that the Fed, in charging A.I.G. an interest rate of more than ten per cent and demanding up to eighty per cent of the company's equity, had been able to impose tough terms in exchange for its support. "We felt we could say that this was a well-secured loan and that we were not putting fiscal resources at risk," the senior Fed official told me.

More important, A.I.G. was a much bigger and more complex firm than Lehman Brothers was. In addition to providing life insurance and homeowners' policies, it was a major insurer of mortgage bonds and other types of securities. If it had been allowed to default, every big financial firm in the country, and many others abroad, would have been adversely affected. But even the announcement of A.I.G.'s rescue wasn't enough to calm the markets.

On Tuesday, September 16th, the Reserve Primary Fund, a New York-based money-market mutual fund that had bought more than seven hundred million dollars in short-term debt issued by Lehman Brothers, announced that it was suspending redemptions because its net asset value had fallen below a dollar a share. The subprime virus was infecting parts of the financial system that had appeared immune to it—including the most risk-averse institutions—and the news that the Reserve Primary Fund had "broken the buck" sparked an investor panic that by mid-October had become global, striking countries as far removed as Iceland, Hungary, and Brazil.

Bernanke accompanied Paulson to Capitol Hill to warn reluctant congressmen about the catastrophic consequences of failing to pass a bailout bill. ("When you listened to him describe it, you gulped," Senator Chuck Schumer, the New York Democrat, said of Bernanke's evocation of the crisis.) He helped enable Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley to convert to bank holding companies, and he coöperated with other regulators on the seizure of Washington Mutual and the sale of most of its operations to J. P. Morgan. He was in his office until 4 A.M. finalizing Citigroup's takeover of Wachovia. (The government agreed to cap Citigroup's potential losses on Wachovia's huge mortgage portfolio.) The Fed also announced that it would spend up to a half-trillion dollars shoring up money-market mutual funds.

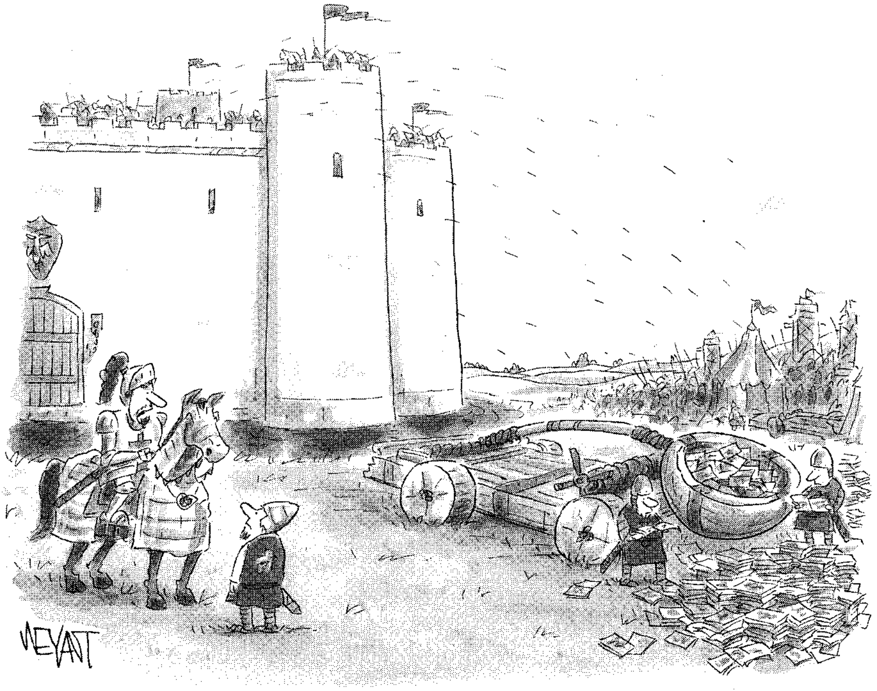
Often, it was clear that Bernanke and Paulson were improvising. On November 10th, the Fed and the Treasury Department announced that they would provide more money to A.I.G., raising the total amount of public funds committed to the company to a hundred and fifty billion dollars. (The Fed's original eighty-five-billion-dollar loan, and a subsequent one, of $37.8 billion, had proved inadequate.) Two days later, Paulson abandoned the idea of buying up distressed mortgage securities—a proposal that he and Bernanke had vigorously defended—and last week, at a hearing of the House Financial Services Committee, congressmen excoriated him. "You seem to be flying a seven-hundred-billion-dollar plane by the seat of your pants," Gary Ackerman, a Democrat from New York, scolded Paulson. Perhaps the most damning criticism came from the committee's chairman, Barney Frank, the Massachusetts Democrat, who noted that although the bailout legislation had included specific provisions to address foreclosures, Americans continued to default on mortgages at a record rate.

The Congressman had a point. Paulson's and Bernanke's efforts to prop up the financial system have so far had little effect on the housing slump, which is the source of the trouble. Until that problem is addressed, the financial sector will remain under great stress.

Last week, the stock market plunged to its lowest level in eleven years, auto executives flew into Washington on their corporate jets to demand a bailout, and Wall Street analysts warned that the political vacuum between Administrations could create more turmoil. "We can't get from here to February 1st if the current 'who's in charge?' situation continues," Robert Barbera, the chief economist at I.T.G., an investment firm, told the *Times.*

Bernanke, though, remains remarkably calm. (Jim Cramer would say oblivious.) He is unapologetic about the alterations to the bailout plan, arguing that changing circumstances demanded them, and he is relieved that the Treasury Department and Congress are now leading the government's response to the crisis. Despite grim news on unemployment, retail sales, and corporate earnings, he is hopeful that an economic recovery will begin sometime next year. Until the middle of last week, there were signs that the credit crisis was easing: some banks were lending to each other again, the interest rates that they charge each other have come down, and no major financial institution has failed since the passage of the bailout bill. "It was a very important step," Bernanke told me last week, referring to the bailout. "It greatly diminished the threat of a global financial meltdown. But, as Hank Paulson said publicly, 'you don't get much credit for averting a disaster.'"

On Wall Street, Bernanke's reviews have improved, especially at firms that have received assistance from the Fed.



"Load the holiday catalogues."

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"I think he has done a superb job, both in coming up with innovative solutions and in coördinating the policy response with the New York Fed, the Treasury Department, and the S.E.C.," John Mack, of Morgan Stanley, told me. "I give him very high marks." George Soros, the investor and philanthropist, whose firm has not benefitted from the Fed's largesse, said, "Early on, being an academic, he didn't realize the seriousness of the problem. But after the start of the year he got the message and he acted very decisively." Still, Soros went on, citing renewed turbulence in the markets and speculation about the fate of Citigroup, whose stock price last Friday fell below four dollars, the crisis is far from over. "With Lehman, the system effectively broke down. It is now on life support from the Fed, but it's really touch and go whether they can hold it together. The pressure is mounting even as we speak." He added, "We may be on the verge of another collapse."

Bernanke, in a search for inspiration and guidance, has been thinking about two Presidents: Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. From the former he took the notion that what policymakers needed in a crisis was flexibility and resolve. After assuming office, in March, 1933, Roosevelt enacted bold measures aimed at reviving the moribund economy: a banking holiday, deposit insurance, expanded public works, a devaluation of the dollar, price controls, the imposition of production directives on many industries. Some of the measures worked; some may have delayed a rebound. But they gave the American people hope, because they were decisive actions.

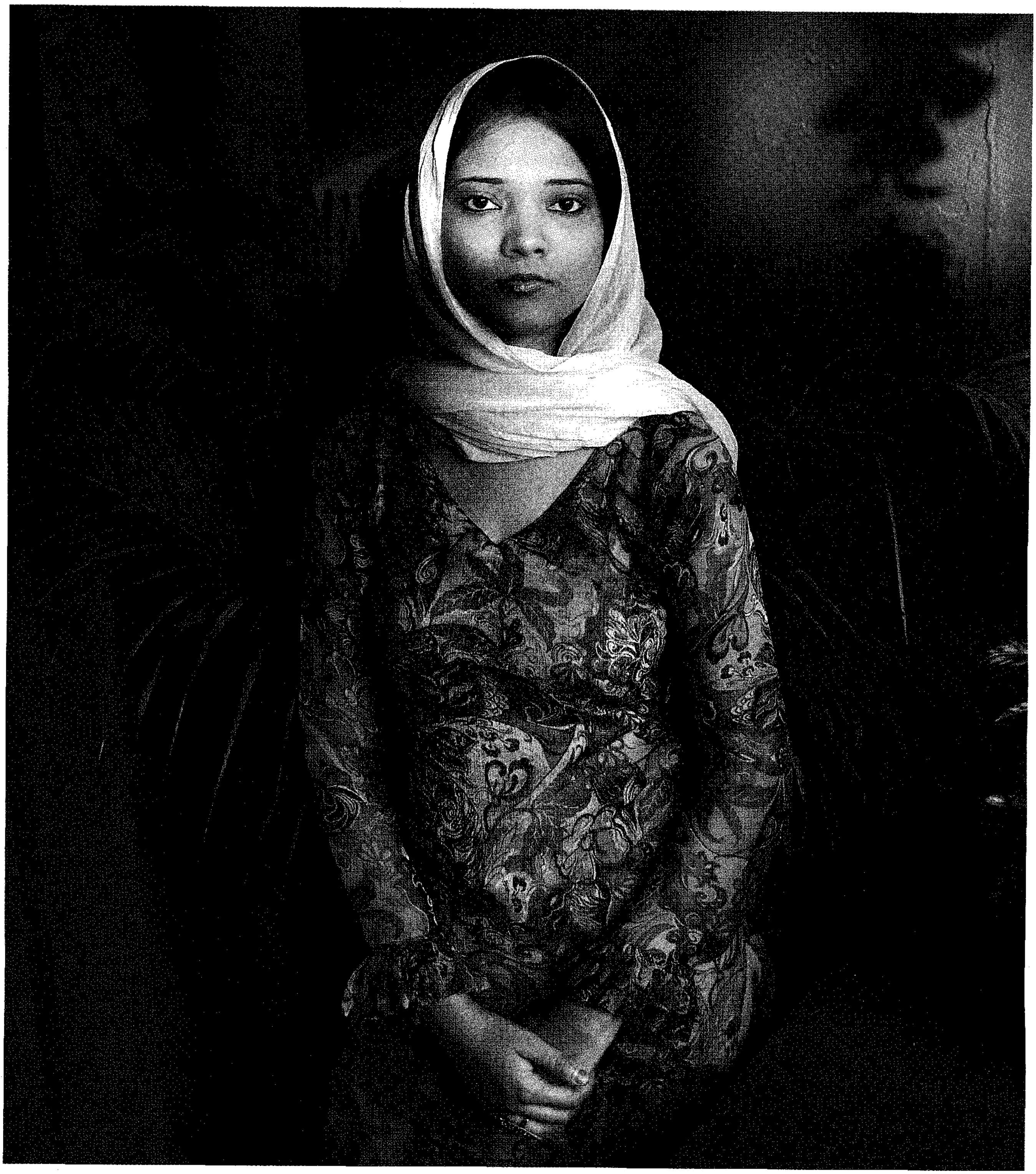
Bernanke's knowledge of Lincoln was more limited, but one morning the man who organizes the parking pool in the basement of the Fed's headquarters had given him a copy of a statement Lincoln made in 1862, after he was criticized by Congress for military blunders during the Civil War: "If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how—the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right will make no difference."

Bernanke keeps the statement on his desk, so he can refer to it when necessary. ♦

FICTION

IN OTHER ROOMS, OTHER WONDERS

BY DANIYAL MUEENUDDIN



Husna needed a job. She stole up the long drive to the Lahore house of the retired civil servant and landlord K. K. Harouni, bearing in her lacquered fingers a letter of introduction from, of all people, his estranged wife. The butler, knowing that Husna served the old Begum Harouni in an indefinite capacity, somewhere between maidservant and companion, did not seat her in the living room. Instead, he put her in the office of the secretary, Shah Sahib, who every afternoon took down in shorthand a few pages of Mr. Harouni's memoirs, cautiously titled "Perhaps This Happened."

Ushered into the living room by the secretary after a quarter of an hour, Husna gazed around her, as petitioners do, more tense than curious, taking in the worn gold brocade on the sofa, a large Chinese painting of horsemen over the rosewood mantel. Her attention was drawn to ranks of black-and-white photographs in silver frames—hunters in shooting caps, posing with strings of birds or piles of game; women in saris, their hair piled high in the style of the fifties, one in riding breeches, with an oversized dedication in looping script. To one side stood a photo of a youthful Harouni in a receiving line shaking the hand of Jawaharlal Nehru.

The door opened, and Mr. Harouni walked in, a mild look on his handsome golden face. Placing a file on the table in front of him, Shah Sahib flipped through the pages and showed the old man where to sign, murmuring, "Begum Sahib has sent this young miss with a letter, sir."

Although he had an excellent memory, and knew the lineage of all the old Lahore families, K.K. allowed Husna to explain in detail her relationship to him, which derived from his grandmother on his mother's side. The senior branch of the family had consolidated its lands and amassed power under the British. Husna's family, a cadet branch, had not so much fallen into poverty as failed to rise. At one time, her grandfather had owned thirty or forty shops in the Old City, but these had been sold off more than thirty years ago, before Lahore grew, in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, and prices increased. Encouraged by K.K., given tea and cakes, Husna forgot herself, falling into the common, rich Punjabi of the inner city. She told with great emphasis a story about her mother, who remembered falling and breaking her teeth on the steps leading into the courtyard of a lost family home, steps that were tall and broad to accommodate the enormous tread of a riding elephant.

CHIARA GOIA

Finishing the tale, Husna was silent for a moment, then narrowed her eyes, collecting herself. "In this world, some families rise and some fall," she said. "And now I've come to you for help. I'm poor and need a job. Even Begum Harouni agrees that I should have a profession. My father can give me nothing—he's weak and has lost his connections. Everyone says I should marry, but I won't."

Outside the living room, which overlooked a side patio, a gardener switched on the yard lights, illuminating a concrete swimming pool half filled with rainwater and leaves. A servant entered the room with an armload of wood, threw it with a crash into the fireplace, then took a bottle of kerosene and poured a liberal splash. He tossed in a match, and the fire roared up. For a moment, he rested on his haunches by the fire, grave before this immemorial mystery, then rose, breaking the spell, and left the room.

A car drove up the circular driveway. A few minutes later, an elderly couple entered the room. Kissing Harouni on the cheek, the woman said in a smoky voice, "Hello, darling." The man, gray beside his brightly dressed companion, his mustache trimmed, waited to one side.

"Hello, Riffat," Harouni said, kissing her on the top of her head and then going over to the wall and pressing a bell. "Will you have a drink, Husky?"

The man glanced at his wife. "I'll have a small whiskey."

The visitor wore a pinkish kurta, too young for her but certainly very expensive, finely printed with a silver design. She eyed Husna, as if pricing her.

"This is Husna," K.K. said to the woman, who had taken a seat on the sofa beside the girl. "Husna has recently graduated and is looking to find some useful work."

"How interesting," the woman said.

They had been speaking in English, and Husna exposed her poor accent, saying, "It is very good to meet you."

Two servants carried in a tea trolley and placed it before the newcomer. The butler, Rafik, brought two whiskeys on a small silver tray.

"Cheers," Husky said, taking a sip and very slightly smacking his lips. "How nice to have a fire."

Riffat Begum poured out tea, offering to refill Husna's cup. The conversation wandered, and Riffat looked meaningfully at Husna once or twice. When she went out in society with Begum Harouni, Husna was not a guest, not even really a presence, but a recourse for the old lady, to fetch and carry, to stay beside her so that the begum would not be left alone. Unable now to meet the occasion, Husna followed the conversation from face to face, the skin around her mouth taut, as if frozen. Abruptly, she stood up, catching a foot on the tea trolley.

"Thank you, Uncle, for your help and your kind advice," she said, although K.K. had given her no advice whatsoever. She meant this as an opening to him, at least as a reproach.

"Let me have the car drop you." He followed Husna onto the veranda while the driver brought the car. "First of all, you need to develop some skills," he said. "Why don't you learn to type? Come tomorrow, and I'll arrange for Shah Sahib to give you lessons."

As she got in the car, he gave her a fatherly kiss on the cheek.

When he returned to the living room, Riffat raised an eyebrow and pursed her lips. "Naughty, naughty," she said, exhaling a cloud of cigarette smoke.

K.K. took a sip of whiskey. "At my age, my dear, she's in no danger."

Husna came every few days for typing lessons. She would sit in the dark office off the living room, inconveniencing Shah Sahib, who could not continue his own work until she had abandoned her weak efforts. He tried to show her the correct technique, but she refused to learn, and insisted upon typing by hunt and peck, getting through her half page as quickly as possible. One of the servants would bring her a cup of tea, which she drank with Shah Sahib, who also at that time received two slices of grilled-cheese toast, a treat that made his stomach growl, and one that he insured by being of service to the cook, passing his bills without question.

K. K. Harouni, who had been a polo and tennis player until he suffered a heart attack, seven years earlier, took a walk morning and evening, totalling exactly four miles each day. Usually, he went from one end of the serpentine back garden to the other, but a few days after Husna began her lessons a winter rain wet the grass. Vaguely diverted by the break in routine, that evening he walked on the brick-paved front driveway instead, looping around the circular lawn and through a carport in which a misplaced glass chandelier cast a friendly yellow light.

At dusk, he heard a rickshaw enter the drive and park at the far end, next to the gatekeeper's shelter, its two-stroke engine crackling. After a moment, a figure stepped from the door of the secretary's office and tripped rapidly down toward the gate. Lengthening his stride, K.K. came up behind her.

"Hello, Husna," he said.

She stopped and turned. As she had the first day, she wore too much makeup and clothes that were too bright. She carried her large white purse on a long chain over one shoulder, and had covered her hair with a *dupatta*. "Hello, Uncle," she said, her face involuntarily stretching into a broad smile.

"You're very cheerful. And how are your lessons?"

"Thank you, Uncle," she said.

"Why don't you walk with me?"

"My ride is waiting." She spoke timidly, for she felt ashamed to be seen taking a rickshaw, which only the lower classes used.

"Tell him to go, and later the driver can take you."

They began walking, Husna taking two strides to every one of his, clicking along in her heels. Her feet began to hurt, and whenever they came to a puddle he would step aside and allow her to go first, so that she had to hurry awkwardly in front of him.

"Those shoes aren't good for walking," he said, looking at her from behind as she skirted a puddle. "Your feet are hurting, aren't they?"

"No, it's fine, really it is." She didn't want to lose this chance of his company.

"Why don't you take them off? Don't be shy, there's no one here."

"You're joking with me, Uncle."

Hesitating for a moment, she reached down and undid the straps, her hand resting tentatively on his shoulder.

When they came to the next puddle, he stopped, amused. "And now that you're barefoot let's see you jump over the puddle."

Quickening, she glanced at him sideways, still a girl at twenty, still playing tag with her cousins in the courtyard of her parents' home, and yet aware of men's eyes flickering over her as she walked through the lanes of the Old City.

He took her hand and swung it. "One, two, three—over you go!"

She leaped, landing just at the edge and splashing.

"Try again, the next one!" he urged, and she jumped, clearing the puddle, then turned to face him, laughing.

"Well done! I've had ponies that couldn't do as well."

"Now you are joking with me."

Rafik came out of the house and reported a telephone call from K.K.'s youngest daughter, Sarwat, who was married to a tremendously wealthy industrialist and lived in Karachi. K.K. went inside, walking unhurriedly, and Husna sat down in one of the chairs placed on the veranda for the petitioners who came each morning, asking the old man for letters to government officials or for work on his farms.

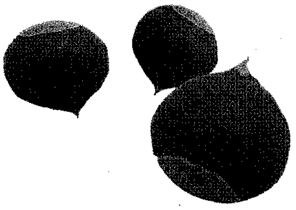
Rafik stood next to her, relaxed, looking out into the night. He glanced at her bare feet but made no comment.

"So, Husna Bibi," he said, "how are the good people over at Bari Begum Sahib's house? How is Chacha Latif?"

Chacha Latif played the corresponding role of butler in the house of K.K.'s estranged wife, and Rafik maintained cordial relations with him. As a matter of comity, they kept each other informed of household gossip.

Understanding this oblique reference to the fact that Chacha Latif treated her with little ceremony, as an equal, Husna sweetly replied, "He's well, Uncle, thank you."

Riding home in K.K.'s large, if old, car, looking at the back of the chauffeur's immense head, Husna let her complex thoughts drift along several lines. Given to fits of crushing gray lassitude and then to brimming moments that approached hysteria, in the latter moods she knew that she would escape the gloominess of her parents' house. She would escape the bare concrete steps, layered with dust, that led up into rooms without windows, the walls painted lurid, glossy colors, as if to make up for the dreariness, the television covered with an embroidered cloth. She had spoiled herself with daydreams, until her parents were afraid of her moods. She despised them for living so much in the past, for retelling the stories of their grandparents' land and money, and yet at the same time she felt entitled to rejoin that world and nursed a grievance at being excluded from it, except as a paid companion to an old woman. Taking service in an ambiguous position with Begum Harouni was the greatest concession she had ever made to her mediocre prospects, and making this concession had only increased her determination to rise, although she had no idea how to go about it.



Husna knew that she could never hope to attract or marry a young man from one of the rich established families. Wearing clothes only slightly better than those of a maidservant, she saw from a distance the young men at the weddings to which she accompanied Begum Harouni. At that time, the old barons still dominated the government, the Prime Minister a huge feudal landowner. Their sons, at least the quick ones, the adapted ones, became ministers at thirty, immaculate, familiar with their elders, blowing through dull parties, on their way to somewhere else, to cool rooms where ice and alcohol glowed on the table, rooms where deals were made; she imagined them gliding through foreign airports, at ease in the European cities that she only read about. She would even have sought a place in the demimonde of singers and film actresses, bright and dangerous creatures from poor backgrounds, but she had neither talent nor beauty. Only determination and cunning distinguished her, invisible qualities.

The chauffeur, knowing without being told that Husna would not wish to be seen going home late at night in the old man's car, dropped her just inside the gate of the house in fashionable Gulberg. K.K. had given this house to his wife when, finally and uncharacteristically, he made a firm decision and told her she had to leave. She had been married by arrangement to K.K., her first cousin, at seventeen, and had soon been eclipsed as he moved into the larger world of the Indian Civil Service, a world defined by English mores and manners. Unable to keep Harouni's attention, barely out of purdah, Begum Harouni had tried amulets, philtres, spells—he joked to his friends that she would end up poisoning him by accident. But one day she came onto the veranda, where he was having tea with a lady friend and innocently playing rummy. She stood, her back humped, spitting in Punjabi, "Leave my house, leave my husband alone, you witch!" And Harouni's friend, a convent-schooled society woman who barely spoke Punjabi and had only a vague idea who this old lady might be, kept asking, "But what's she saying, K.K.? Should I leave?" He had not, however, divorced his wife, having no intention of remarrying and no desire to humiliate her. Old Begum Harouni thereafter lived in a state of suspended equilibrium, hoping to be recalled to her husband's side.

Husna cautiously walked up the straight, long drive, bordered with bougainvillea and jasmine. She went to the back, where the servants lay under blankets in the courtyard, and slipped through an open door, through the filthy kitchen, which smelled of garlic and curry, and into the heavily carpeted dining room. Over the fireplace, which had not been lit in years, she saw her face in a mirror. The irregularity of her features, her straight, dry hair, her small mouth, all caused her to cringe inwardly and suddenly to feel vulnerable. She felt the immensity of her encounter with K. K. Harouni. The old lady didn't wake, but just before dawn she called Husna, saying that she couldn't sleep, and told the girl to massage her legs.

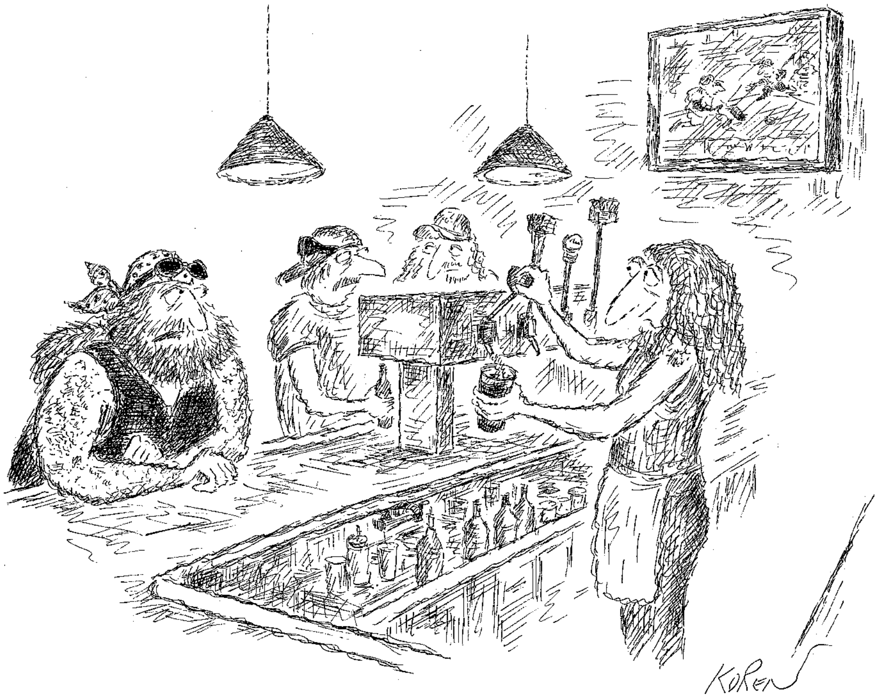
Husna continued going for lessons, and thrice in the next weeks walked with K.K., who then sent her home in the car. She tried to limit these encounters, fearing that Begum Harouni would discover the growing relationship and send her away, back to her parents. On the days when she allowed herself to see him, Husna would stay in the office after the secretary left, gazing out of a window that overlooked the long garden where K.K. walked. She didn't read, but sat at the desk surrounded by books in both English and Urdu, her chin resting on her hands. She did not even plan but floated through images, for she did not plan her movements.

Whenever she saw a girl her age stepping from a large new car among the expensive shops in Liberty Market, or glittering in a pair of diamond drops at a wedding, Husna's mind would hang like a swaying fruit on these symbols of wealth, not letting go for hours. She sensed that all this might come to her through Harouni, if she were to become his mistress. In the Old City, where she grew up, the neighborhood pointed with shaming fingers at women from less than respectable families who were kept by merchants. The eyes of these creatures glided over the crowd as they rode on tongas, emerging untouched from dark streets where sewage flowed in the uncovered gutters, as prominent as targets in brightest-red silk, lipstick, gold. Husna's mother ground out remarks about the price to be paid: broken family relations, broken old age.

The girl's fear of Harouni had dissipated, and she began to let herself be seen as she was—critical, quick-witted, sensual, and slightly crude. Not despite but because of his sophistication, he found her manner piquant. She did not behave or speak in the way of the women he normally met, for she had always inhabited an indefinite space, neither rich nor poor, neither servant nor begum, in a city where the very concept of a middle class still found expression in only a few households, among managers of banks and of big industrial concerns—sugar and textiles and steel. As a boy, Harouni had slept with maidservants, lost his virginity to one of them at fourteen. Husna evoked those ripe first encounters.

Six weeks after Husna's initial walk with K.K., Begum Harouni announced a pilgrimage to the Holy Places, in order to perform the *umrah*. Husna decided to bring the begum's impending departure into the conversation with Harouni that afternoon, before any guests arrived and interrupted them.

When Rafik brought afternoon tea into the living room, K.K. could hear the typewriter clacking in the background. It



"Give me a whiskey with a shot of wheatgrass, ginger, beet, and local honey."

stopped, and then Husna knocked. She opened the door, showing her head without entering.

"Come in, my dear."

Husna's cultivation of Rafik had progressed to the point where he included an extra cup on the tea trolley. She drew herself forward and made K.K.'s tea exactly as he liked it. A boy passed a plate of biscuits, while Rafik stood back on his heels by the door.

"When I'm here," Husna said, "everything is so nice and everyone is pleasant. These biscuits, the tea. Shah Sahib tries so hard to teach me the typing, though I can't seem to learn." She held out her hands and spread her fingers in front of him, like a cat stretching. "My hands are so tiny, I can't reach the keys. But then all of me is small."

She wore a tight kurta, showing the cleft of her breasts, which jutted out from her muscular youthful torso. Their eyes met; they both saw the joke, and he allowed himself a tight-lipped smile, his composed expression becoming avid and boyish.

"That's what I've been telling you about," Husna purred, putting her hand on his arm. "Your crocodile smile, the one I like."

After pausing for a moment, she lowered her eyes and said in a meek voice, "But soon I won't be able to come here. The begum is going on *umrah*, so I'll have to be in charge of her house."

"Not *umrah* again!" K.K. said. "It's becoming a vice with her. But, darling, don't be ridiculous. If she's away, you can come even more regularly."

"When the begum is gone, they don't cook any food at all, just the servants' food. I sometimes go into the bazaar to eat. And Begum Sahib doesn't like me to use the electricity."

"You poor thing," K.K. said. "And you ask so little."

Husna's eyes became moist. "Yesterday, Begum Sahib had gone out when I got back to the house, and she had locked all the doors and taken the keys with her. I stood under the trees in front for three hours. And if I eat anything from the refrigerator she becomes angry at me. And when she's gone on *umrah* the servants will take liberties—they'll make jokes and want me to sit with them. She won't leave me any money." She wiped her eyes with her *dupatta*, head cast down. "When Begum Sahib is harsh, what can I do?"

"Come, little one," K.K. said, patting the sofa next to him. "Come sit here. Don't cry." K. K. Harouni avoided unpleasantness at all costs, for he lived in a world as measured and as concentric as that of the Sun King at Versailles. He did not like to see her cry, because it upset him. She slipped under his arm, still tearful but muffling her face in his sweater. He stroked her hair.

"Now, stop," he said. "Why don't you come stay here while the begum is on *umrah*? I'll have them fix up the rooms in the annex."

Husna looked out from under her eyelashes and smiled weakly. "Oh, I would like that too much. Then I could keep you company when you're alone and make your tea for you. And I would practice typing every day for a long time."

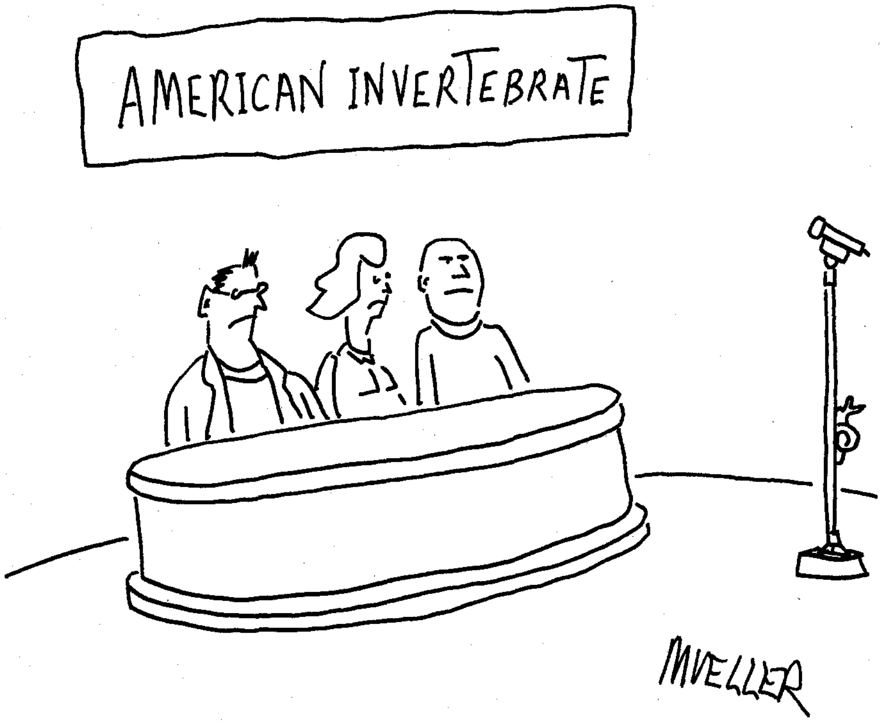
K.K. cared nothing for what his wife or the servants thought. He ordered the servants to prepare the annex, a suite of rooms built over some garages at the far side of the compound. The rooms had been refurbished several years earlier, when important guests from India had come for a long stay, and so Husna would live in better quarters than ever before in her life, with uninterrupted supplies of good food, servants who more or less did her bidding, and the occasional use of a car. To Husna it felt like a validation, almost like revenge, and yet with the bitterness of triumph after humiliation.

She simply disappeared from the house in Gulberg. Begum Harouni learned of her departure from the servants. The old lady stormed over to see her husband but found him impervious to her outrage.

"I'll never take that little . . . *thing* back into my house," Begum Harouni said. "Imagine! I picked her from the dirt, from nothing, and I fed and clothed her."

"It reflects well upon you, my dear," K.K. responded placidly.

Husna brought her shabby luggage to the house on Aikman Road, a brown suitcase, bulging and strapped. She had clothes and shoes, not much else, had arrived in a rickshaw—the facts soon transmitted through the house by the snickering community of washermen, drivers, sweepers, household servants. After Begum Harouni had gone on the pilgrimage, Husna asked K.K. for the use of the car and went back to the old lady's house. At first, Chacha Latif would not let her in, but Husna raised her voice and became abusive, and the butler, knowing that she might later be in a position to injure him, let her do what she wanted. All the closets had been locked, but she found a few of her things—a pile of Indian movie magazines, a little dish with an image of the Eiffel Tower that her grandfather had brought home from a Euro-



pean tour in the nineteen-twenties. When she went out, she discovered K.K.'s driver speaking with Chacha Latif.

"What does he say?" Husna said to the driver as they returned along Aikman Road, driving in and out of the shade cast by flame-of-the-forest trees planted a hundred years ago.

"Nothing, Bibi," the driver said.

"Nothing? Not anything at all?" Husna replied, speaking in sharp Punjabi. And then, leaning back in the seat, she added, "You drivers are always the clever ones."

A week after she moved into the annex, Husna slept with K. K. Harouni. He had visitors for lunch, an old Civil Service friend, a retired State Bank governor, and his cousin the retired General Karim, along with their wives. They ate in the room known as the black veranda, its French doors shaded by a pipal tree and overlooking a side garden. Already, in early April, the ceiling fans barely kept the room cool. Husna remained in the annex, trying to read a dull and badly printed history of the Sikh Wars, in which K.K.'s ancestors had fought. Though she wanted to make herself interesting to the old man by reading serious books, she never finished what she began, lapsing instead into daydreams or turning to old fashion magazines that she bought from a secondhand-book stall. A servant boy brought her a tray of food, the same food that the cook was serving to K.K. and his guests.

From her perch in the rooms above the garage, Husna watched the guests emerge into the portico and continue speaking to Harouni for what seemed an interminable period before driving away. Soon afterward, a servant came to ask Husna if she would join Harouni for tea in the garden. She walked past the formal dining room and along a corridor hung with darkened portraits of his ancestors. She felt intimidated by this house, by its heavy gloomy air, which contrasted with K.K.'s easy manner, and she looked almost uncomprehendingly upon the strange objects scattered about—the ivory scabbard of a Chinese sword, a carved walnut loveseat from Kashmir, numerous brass and copper figurines of Hindu gods. The house smelled of dusty carpets and disinfectant and wood polish. K.K. was sitting under a tree in a railway chair, with two cups of tea on a table.

"Hello, girl," he said, pleased to see her, fed and mellow. "How lovely it is." Old trees were scattered around the receding lawn, creating areas of shade where the grass wouldn't grow. A row of mulberry trees just ripening at the far end attracted sugar-sipping bees with their purple berries hanging from branches and littering the ground. In the bleached sky, kites and vultures wheeled at a great height on the afternoon thermals, as if the sky itself were slowly turning.

Draining the tea, he said, "Well, my dear, it's time for my rest."

"Let me massage you, Uncle," she suggested, blushing. Though her ambition always tolled in the background, she had come to respect him, for his unstudied fairness, his gaiety, his integrity and openness, which was as plain and light and valuable as a metal unknown in her world. She wanted to keep her part of the bargain, and had only herself to give. It hurt her that it was so little; she imagined that her body, her virtue meant almost nothing to her.

She followed him into his bedroom. Rafik had already closed the curtains and laid out K.K.'s pajamas.

"You needn't wake me," he said to Rafik, who stood by the door and who knew very well the routine to be observed on such an afternoon.

Of course she was a virgin, and that touched him. Letting him do exactly as he wanted, she wore a look in her eyes that he mistook for surprise and shyness, and later identified with moods that verged on madness—sequences of perplexity and focus, expressing a hooded rage. She had expected this to be as simple as the signing of a check, a payment. Instead, for a moment the romantic girl awoke, one who might have accepted another man, a man her own age, from her own station.

Goodbye to the life she would never have, economies that she would never make as she cooked and kept house for a clerking husband in the Old City; goodbye to the boys who might have accepted her hand. She might have gone away with that young husband, might have moved out to the new suburbs of Lahore—the ones by the airport, their grids of streets laid out in wheat fields or untended orchards, no houses yet built. The moment meant a great deal to her, but not in the way that Harouni understood it. Without meaning to, she had given herself completely. She could pretend later to be a virgin—or someone might take her even knowing that she wasn't. Marriages could always be arranged, it was always a bargain, a deal. But she knew then that she wouldn't have another man, because any man after this would have to be a compromise, a salary man.

When he had no guests, K.K. ate lunch with Husna. Rafik served with care, offering the dishes from the left, removing plates from the right, the napkins starched and arranged like fans by the plates. Now, in May, the air-conditioning had been turned on. In the dining room, the coolest room in the house, Husna felt the most intimidated. She sat at K.K.'s right, at the end of the long table that could seat eighteen, and spoke little. She had learned which utensils to use, but still did not use them gracefully. K.K. chewed his food exactly ten times before swallowing.

One afternoon, as Rafik brought in a cheese soufflé, a car drove up to the house. K.K. had his back to the window and did not turn. They heard the creaking of the carved swinging doors, taken from K.K.'s ancestral home in the Old City, and then the visitor, a middle-aged woman, pushed into the dining room.

"Hello, Daddy," she said. "Isn't this cozy!" She had a tinkling laugh, which, while it did not seem entirely genuine, had a musicality that caused the hearer to join her in a heightened response, like a painting that one knows to be good, although one is unmoved by it.

K.K. rose, seeming suddenly frail and old, and kissed his youngest daughter, Sarwat, on the forehead.

"Hello, darling. When did you get in?"

"Just now, on the eleven-o'clock flight. I'm here because Pinky's daughter got secretly engaged. Don't ask!"

They sat down, and so did Husna, who had also risen.

"This is Husna," K.K. said, "Mian Nasiruddin's daughter."

"Yes, yes, I know," Sarwat said maliciously, looking not at Husna's face but at her body. "I met her at Mummy's."

Rafik brought in a mat and laid a place for Sarwat. "Good Lord, Rafik," she commented, rearranging the cutlery. "You're getting even fatter."

Sarwat settled back into her chair. She

wore an understated tan sari, a gold watch, and several unusual rings—a star sapphire and a Burmese pigeon-blood ruby. Her salt-and-pepper hair, arranged in a high chignon, lengthened her still beautiful face; and her slender groomed body suggested lotions and expensive soaps, a hairdresser and a masseuse, idleness and ease. Even at fifty, she had admirers, and it had become a convention among the circle in which she moved to speak of her lovely gray eyes.

"I am very glad to see you again," Husna said.

Sarwat looked down at the girl with a wolfish grin, almost spoke, then turned to her father. "You look well, Daddy."

He had resumed eating and, with his mouth full, raised a fork, as if to say, You can see for yourself.

"Tell me, what do you know about the Talpur boy, the son of Bilqis Talpur? Mumtaz went off and got engaged to him, and Pinky's absolutely livid. That's why she called me here. I can only stay for a minute—I told her I'd be at her house just after lunch."

K.K., who took these matters seriously, put down his fork. "I spent time with his grandfather when I was posted to Layyah. The old man had a bit of a temper, and of course you know about the father. You should speak to Wali—the boy was at Aitchison with him, a year before or a year after."

Husna broke in. "He is very handsome."

Sarwat looked at her in amazement, as if the furniture had spoken. "Tell me about the land," she said to her father.

"It's good land, on the river. The family used to hold a big parcel near the city, and that would be enormously valuable." He looked at her, raising a warning eyebrow. "But then they say that Jano spent the last thirty years drinking it away."

Finishing the meal, they rose to have green tea in the living room.

As they stood, Sarwat said to Husna, "I'd like to be alone with my father, please."

K.K. followed Sarwat into the living room. She sat down on a sofa and tucked her feet under her, leaning against a large pillow. "Really, Daddy," she began. "I can imagine keeping her around, but to sit and have lunch with her, that's too much. You're becoming eccentric, you really are."

"She comes from a good family," K.K. said. "Her great-grandfather owned more land than yours. But for a few twists of fate, she might be in your place, and we might be living still in the Old City."

"But we're not," Sarwat said. "That's the point, we're not." She tried another tack. "And what can you possibly find to say to her? Sheherezad told me she came for tea the other day, and this unfortunate little thing sat without saying a word, just listening, like a frog in the corner. It's indecent."

"She, too, would have wished for your advantages, my dear, your schools and clothes and friends and property."

"Please, Daddy. I doubt if this is a humanitarian mission."

"And I'm lonely, Sarwat. You're in Karachi, Kamila is in New York, and Rehana has barely spoken to me in all the ten years that your mother's been living apart. My friends are dying off or don't go out anymore. She keeps me company. She's no genius, if you like, but she can play cards and so on. Why don't you spend more time in Lahore? You have a lovely house here, and friends. I would much prefer to see you than her, but you're not here."

"What about Riffat or one of your other old girlfriends? Why choose someone like this? She's neither pretty nor presentable."

"At my age, what I need is companionship, and Husna can give that to me. Riffat can only come for tea or for a few hours, but Husna is here whenever I need her."

They sat in silence, neither satisfied with the other. After a few moments, Sarwat put down her cup. "Daddy, I must go. I'll come this evening. Please, at least tell her not to come out when I'm here."

That afternoon, when Husna entered his room, summoned from the annex, K.K. felt abashed. Irresistibly drawn to the one subject that he wished to avoid, he said, "It's wonderful to see Sarwat. I hope you and she will get to know each other." He had been sitting on the edge of the bed, and now he rolled over, tucked himself under the sheet, and put a black mask over his eyes, to screen out the light.

PEACE

The trade of war is over, there are no more battles,
but simple murder is still in.
The No God, Time, creeps his way,
universe after universe, like a great snapping turtle
opening its mouth wagging its tongue
to look like a worm or leech
so deceived hungry fish, every living thing
swims in to feed. Quarks long for dark holes,
atoms butter up molecules, protons do unto neutrons
what they would have neutrons do unto them.
The trade of war has been over so long,
the meaning of war in the O.E.D. is now "nonsense."
In the Russian Efron Encyclopedia,
war, *voina*, means "dog shit";
in the Littré, *guerre* is "a verse form, obsolete";
in Germany, *Krieg* has become "a whipped-cream pastry";
Sea of Words, the Chinese dictionary,
has war, *zhan zheng*, as "making love in public,"
while war in Arabic and Hebrew, with the same
Semitic throat, *harb* and *milchamah*, is defined
as "anything our distant grandfathers ate
we no longer find tempting—like the eyes of sheep."
And lions eat grass.

—*Stanley Moss*

Snarling, her face contorted, Husna exploded. "She's mean and rude and a nasty old stick besides. Why don't you get her to come live in the annex and play cards with you and make your tea?"

"I can't have you speaking like this," K.K. said, removing the mask, his face drawn and imposing. "You're upsetting me." He spoke in a measured voice. "You've upset me."

"I'm leaving this house," she said, standing up on the bed, looking down at him. "I gave you everything I had, but you give me nothing in return. I have feelings, too. I'm human. She made me feel like dirt, and you didn't say anything to stop her." She began to cry hysterically, and when he sat up and tried to touch her leg she shrieked and stepped back. "Even the servants here treat me as if I'm nothing. When I ask for things, they tell me that they don't have time. I have to crawl even in front of them. Yesterday, Hassan swore at me." Husna had been waiting for some concrete provocation and had pounced when Hassan, in his habitual foul temper, called her a bitch under his breath.

"I'll speak with him," K.K. said. "Now, stop. You know the doctor's orders. Do you want me to have another heart attack?"

She dared push him no further, and so gradually became quiet. She lay down on the bed, though she wouldn't get under the covers.

When K.K. woke, Husna said, "Talk to Hassan now. I won't stand the servants' treatment of me anymore." Knowing she couldn't yet win the larger battle against Sarwat, she wanted at least to consolidate her smaller gains. She insisted that K.K. speak to Hassan in front of her, though he would have preferred not to humiliate the old servant.

The grizzled cook stood with his shoes off, having left them at the door, and with his lambskin hat clutched in his hand. He looked down at the floor, at his splayed bare feet planted on the polished rosewood parquet. Rafik waited by the door.

"Bibi says that yesterday you swore at her."

"Yes, sir," the old cook said. "I mean, no, sir."

"Well Hassan, did you or didn't you?"

"No, sir."

Husna became shrill. "I asked him not to put chilies in the omelette, and he swore at me. Ask the sweeperess, she heard."

Hassan looked at her squarely. "You and the sweeperess together."

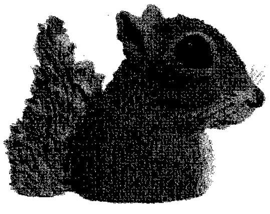
"You can go," Harouni said, not raising his voice.

When Hassan had left, Harouni said to Rafik, who had been impassively watching this performance, "See that this doesn't happen anymore."

While she knew that now the servants would be decided against her, Husna felt she could afford their ill will, for her position in the household was growing stronger daily. The attitude of the servants changed after Rafik gave them the word. Only a few, the old ones, covered their insolence with glacial politeness, while the younger ones became either servile or friendly to the point of taking liberties, thinking thereby to win her favor.

Husna began to enjoy the advantages of her new position. The secretary, Shah Sahib, handled the household accounts, writing up all the expenses in a complicated double-entry bookkeeping system, so complicated, in fact, that K.K. couldn't and wouldn't take the trouble to understand it. For years, the books had been larded with excessive expenses. The drivers, Hassan, Rafik, all those who handled money, lavishly inflated the bills that they submitted. After Husna had a few times complained of not having money, of wearing torn clothes and broken-heeled shoes, K.K. instructed that she be given a tiny allowance. In old age he had become tightfisted, although the household hemorrhaged money, and he spent two or three hundred thousand rupees a month without knowing where it went. Shah Sahib soon enlisted Husna in his system, since he didn't want her to begin making inquiries, and so her allowance grew larger and larger each month, inflated in various ingenious ways.

She bought herself clothes, even small bits of gold jewelry. In her rooms she kept one and then two locked steel trunks, which she filled with everything from raw silk to electric sandwich-makers. She would come to K.K. with some special request, wanting to buy something, and he would ultimately agree. She wheedled, petted him, became frosty, became nice. Giving in, he would be unable to look her in the eye. She said to him, speaking plainly, "Scratch a man and find a boy."



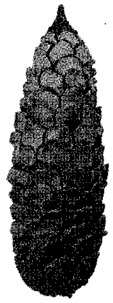
A few of K.K.'s old gentleman friends, retired and retiring landowners with courtly Punjabi manners, came to the decision that they had no reason to isolate the girl. They called her "daughter" and looked forward to her lively, flirtatious company. Among this group, who in old age constituted K.K.'s closest friends, he had always been the fast one, the sportsman and the lover. They envied him the possession of Husna, while at the same time being mildly relieved on returning to their lugubrious homes after a few hours in her company. Her striving wore on them. She flattered them, asked about their harmless projects—a Union of Punjabi Landowners, a pipe-dream society for tort reform—and so wielded them into a circle, with herself at the center. She teased them; sitting by Harouni's side during bridge games, she would try to peek at his opponents' cards. Playing rummy for small stakes with whoever was the dummy in the bridge game, she cheated, and, when caught, laughed and denied it.

The air-conditioner in the annex didn't work properly, and on that pretext Husna moved into a study adjoining the master bedroom. She did not stay the entire night with K.K., but invariably withdrew to her own room, saying that his tossing disturbed her. Once in her own room, she would take sleeping pills, occasionally a double dose—a game that she played against herself, sinking almost too far into sleep. In the morning, sometimes she didn't answer when the servant knocked at her door, and then K.K. would himself come and shake her, wearing his pajamas and an old silk robe. He would look down at her sleeping face, cleansed of all ambition and anxiety and spite, qualities that he forgave her because he felt that the conditions into which he had thrust her drew them out. Seeing her asleep, he sometimes thought that he loved her, loved her brightness in these last years of his life, when he had become so lonely. General Hadayatullah, the retired chief medical officer of the Army, had told K.K. that his heart might carry him away at any moment. K.K. feared death with the terror of a perfectly rational man who took no comfort in religion and knew death to be his final end. He wanted so much to live!

Gradually, Husna would wake.

"Suppose something happened to me in the night?" K.K. would ask as she sipped her tea, lying in bed, her face drained and pale. She looked prettiest then, emerging from her drugged sleep, erased.

She would cry and ask him not to speak of such things, and at those moments he felt that she, too, genuinely loved him, something that he often doubted, despite her professions of love. He craved her presence and reproached himself with a phrase that he once even repeated to her: Too old to be roused by pleasure, I seek pain.



In August, the monsoons broke. The rains came up from India, washing the Himalayas, filling the rivers of the Punjab, pouring down water on the Hindu Kush and on the plain that extends from the Khyber to Karachi. In the gardens outside K.K.'s room, crows sat bedraggled in the dripping branches of ancient trees, and the lawns filled with water.

One night, the bell in the servants' quarters rang, and Rafik rose, dressed, and hurried to K.K.'s room. The master sat up in bed, in the glare of the single light.

"Something's wrong," he said. "My pulse is racing. Wake Husna."

Husna came into the room, wiping her face, adjusting her clothes.

"What is it, Uncle?"

"Telephone General Hadayatullah. It's my chest."

K.K. sat in bed, scared, his face thin and worn, and distracted himself with meaningless banter, falling into Husna's mode of speech, which had become for them a private language.

"So, Bibi, for a while you won't be plucking me clean at rummy. Or they'll give me bed rest, and we'll play even more, and soon you'll have salted away a nice fat dowry." In the past he would have found this kind of joking in poor taste. He had begun teasing her, saying that she was seeking a young husband—leaving him—and almost convincing himself that she was. In fact, as he mimicked her brassy manners and her slang, saying in jest what couldn't be said outright, she steadily drew him onto her own ground, where she could engage and control him so much more effectively.

Servants had crowded into the hallway outside the master bedroom, perhaps twenty of them, barefoot and speaking in whispers, having come into the house by ones or twos as they learned that something had happened to K.K.

The General swept in, a tall Anglicized officer, his trimmed mustache and the severe cut of his clothes reflecting a sense of purpose. Rafik, who knew the General well, brought a stool. The General administered an EKG on a portable machine, took the tape to the light, and said, "Go immediately to Mayo Hospital. Carry him out in a chair." He clicked shut the lid of the machine and put the tape away in his vest pocket.

For a moment, Husna and K.K. looked at each other, his face lined and grave, hers puffy with sleep. For the first time, he thought of her as a grownup, as a woman; and for the first time she thought of him as a lover, sick and possibly dying.

All the servants, the gardeners, the chauffeurs, the junior ones who normally saw K.K. only from a distance, wanted to help carry the chair through the corridors of the house, where just a few lights burned, piercing the shadows. K.K. sat impassively on the chair, raised above the crowd, then lowered at the doors, like an awkward king, a king onstage.

As Husna prepared to get into the car, the General stopped her. "You need to be here," he said. "People will be coming to ask about him. He's probably going to be all right, but you should call Sarwat and the others. Kamila should come back from New York. Have them call Rehana also." Husna began to cry, shaking, and the General stood back and looked at her shrewdly. "Don't," he said. "This isn't about you. Prepare yourself now. Remember who you are."

By midmorning, people had begun to call at the house, for in Lahore word travelled quickly. Husna received them, sitting in the living room. She had dressed up too much, wearing an embroidered white kurta. Several of the guests asked about Sarwat.

Sarwat had ordered that a car be waiting at the airport to meet each flight from Karachi, as she would get a seat as quickly as possible. Just before lunch, she entered the living room. An elderly couple who had been sitting with Husna stood up.

"What's happened?" Sarwat asked. "What are you doing here? Where's Daddy?"

The old couple quickly took their leave as Husna explained.

"Please," Sarwat said, "this is a time for family. I've asked my cousin Hafiza to come here and receive people. Go up to your room and stay there."

Husna didn't dare tell Sarwat that she had moved next to the master bedroom. A servant turned on the air-conditioner in the annex, and Husna remained there all day, watching through the window as callers arrived and left. Hassan sent up some food, but she didn't eat. She knew she would not be allowed to attend K.K. at the hospital.

In the middle of the night, she fell asleep, still sitting in the chair by the window. Waking in the morning, she looked down at the driveway jammed with cars. Without even picking up a *dupatta*, she ran down the stairs and into the servants' area. Rafik sat on a chair sobbing unnaturally, as if racked with coughing, his head in his hands, his elbows on his knees. She saw very distinctly the old man's bare head, bowed down, the gray thin hairs, the scalp. She knew, of course, that K.K. had died. Two other servants, young ones new to the house, sat uncertainly on their haunches. They looked at her with curiosity, but said nothing. She turned, her eyes filling with tears, and walked back to the annex. She lay down on the bed, her feelings concentrated at the forefront of her mind like an immensely weighted black point, incomprehensible.

When Husna emerged from her bedroom and looked again at the drive, she saw men putting up a tent, where the male guests would mourn during the *janazah*. The women would sit inside the house with the body. She unlocked one of her massive trunks and removed a suit of clothing that she had brought with her when she came into the household, a cheap shalwar and kurta, with a simple white *dupatta*. Wearing this costume, she entered the living room. The body of K. K. Harouni lay on the floor, wrapped in a white cloth, his jaw bound closed with a white bandage, the knot tied jauntily near one ear. His dentures had been lost, and his cheeks had caved in. His body had shrunk, lying among rose petals scattered by the servants. Sarwat rose from her place at the head of the corpse, touched Husna on the head with both hands, but said nothing. Husna went to the back of the room and sat down as far away as possible from K.K.'s old wife, who was telling the rosary, a stunned expression on her face. All sorts of women had come, women from all phases of K.K.'s life, and more kept arriving, clicking through the front vestibule in high heels, spilling out into other rooms. From various places, soft or loud sobbing would break out and then subside. Two society women sat uncomfortably on the floor next to Husna, whispering, gossiping, and she heard one say to the other in English, "Oh, isn't that *delicious*."

Of course you don't care, thought Husna, who wouldn't cry in front of them. She felt that only she cared, that she had lost more than all the others.

And yet she wanted to be like them—they were what she had lost.

For the next two days, Husna stayed in the annex, without once going out. People came day and night to offer condolences to Sarwat and Kamila. Rehana had arrived from Paris, where she taught some esoteric form of women's studies, but she stayed with her mother rather than at K.K.'s house. Husna felt that they had forgotten her, and she wanted to be forgotten, to stay here alone in these rooms, with their rush mats, their pieces of scavenged furniture, and an air-conditioner that almost kept the apartment cool, dribbling water onto the pavement below. On the third day, a servant came, early in the morning, before there were any callers, to say that the sisters wished to speak with her. They were waiting for Husna in the living room, all three wearing saris, relaxed, Kamila sitting with her feet curled under her on a sofa, Rehana and Sarwat in high-backed chairs.

They got straight to the point, Kamila, as the eldest, speaking.

"My father allowed you to live in this house. However, he would not have wanted you to stay here. Tomorrow afternoon, the car will be available to take you wherever you wish to be taken. I suppose you'll go to your father's house." She settled back, finished with the problem.

Husna, who had taken a seat halfway through this monologue, although she had not been invited to do so, looked down at the floor. Tears welled up in her eyes.

"Did Uncle say anything about me before . . . before . . .?"

Sarwat broke in. "No," she replied with finality. "There was and is nothing for you."

"That isn't what I meant," Husna said.

Kamila softened. "Look, whatever you had with my father is gone now. If you took care of him in these past months, you were rewarded. You're young, you'll find other things. You think that you'll never heal, but you will, sooner than you think."

Now Husna stood. She had reached the bottom, and her pride arose, her sense of wanting to be dignified, to accept the inevitable.

Just as she reached the door, Rehana called to her: "There's one other thing. They tell me you have a number of trunks in your room. I will not ask what you have in them. You may take those with you. But nothing else."

Reaching the annex, Husna sat on the bed and buried her face in her hands. She had hoped that Rehana, the foreign one, the aggrieved one, would take her side—yet it was she who had pronounced the harshest words. In the end, their estrangements were less important than their contempt for her. They had closed up against her—family, blood. She tried to tell herself that she had gone to the sisters hoping for nothing, with nothing in her heart but sadness at the death of their father, who had loved her. She should have said something cold, should have refused their last insulting offer.

"For him I should have said, 'I came with nothing, I leave with nothing. I leave with the clothes on my back. I served your father, when you were far away. The shame be on your heads.'"

But she could not afford even this gesture. The next day, two men loaded the trunks onto a horse-drawn cart and carried them away to the Old City. ♦

THE NEW YORKER, NOV. 12, 1927
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THE CRITICS

THE CURRENT CINEMA

TRUE LOVE

"Milk" and "Twilight."

BY DAVID DENBY

At the beginning of Gus Van Sant's vibrantly entertaining bio-pic "Milk," Harvey Milk (Sean Penn) picks up a much younger man in the New York subway. Physically, the two are far from equals: Penn's Milk is forty and short, with a big schnoz and matted wedges of hair heading uneasily in different directions; Scott Smith, played by James Franco, is tall and slender, with an angel face and a curly brown mane. But Smith is charmed by Milk's self-deprecating humor, and turned on by his ravenous need. Sighing, Smith gives in and goes home with him. It is the first of Harvey Milk's triumphs that we see. With Smith in tow, he moves to San Francisco, in 1972, and sets up a camera shop in the Castro district. He becomes locally famous as a gay activist and unofficial neighborhood fixer. He trades favors with the Teamsters, arranging a boycott of Coors beer in gay bars when the brewery won't sign a contract with the union; in return, the Teamsters allow openly gay men to drive beer-delivery trucks. In 1977, on his third try, Milk is elected as a district supervisor (the equivalent of a city councilman in New York). He is at the height of his influence, and possibly bound for the mayoralty. But, in 1978, along with Mayor George Moscone, he is shot and killed by a fellow-supervisor, the family-values conservative Dan White (Josh Brolin).

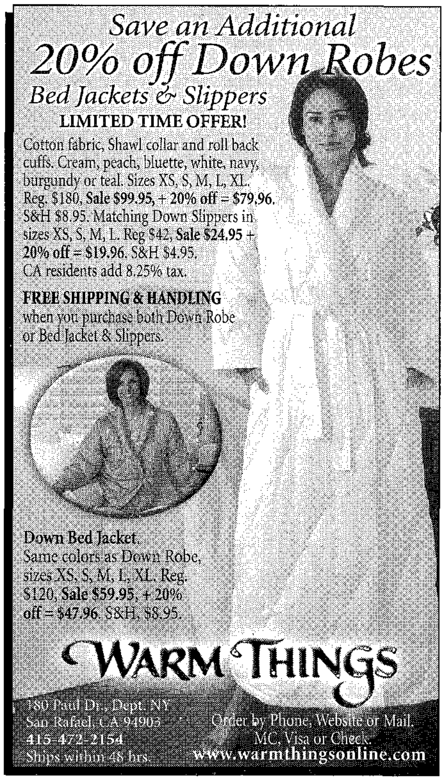
In making this movie, Van Sant is forced to wrestle with the assorted pieties built into three high-minded genres: not just the bio-pic but also the fallen-martyr saga and the social-protest statement. Working with the screenwriter Dustin Lance Black, he includes archival footage from the nineteen-fifties and sixties of gays being arrested in bars and pushed into police vans. He uses news footage of Dianne Feinstein (then the head of the Board of Supervisors) announcing the murders. He devotes serious time to speeches and campaign strategizing. Van Sant wants to tell the political story accurately and in detail, but "Milk" is anything but starchy. The righteous march of events is warmed by the banter, the casual sex, and the candor of the gay milieu of the giddy seventies, the period just before AIDS, when life was free and easy. Some sort of sexual mischief is almost always playing out around the edges of the action, and, at the center of the picture, Milk comes across as an idiosyncratic man, a rule-bound New York Jew who finds his calling in the beautiful and sensually relaxed Mediterranean-style city. The gay leader becomes a superb pol with a human-rights agenda, and the movie offers a mildly subversive suggestion: attracting the electorate is not all that different from picking up a young man in the subway. Charm, persistence, and articulate passion are required for both.

Harvey Bernard Milk, the son of Bill and Minnie Milk, was born on Long Island, in Woodmere, in 1930. After graduating from SUNY Albany, he joined the Navy, became a chief petty officer during the Korean War, and then took up the life of a cultivated closeted gay man in New York City. He worked as a research analyst at Bache & Co., lived on Central Park West, and went to the opera; he carried on a series of monogamous affairs with men. His early life is no more than hinted at in the movie, but his conservative background—he even supported Goldwater, in 1964—is an essential part of his fascination as a character. This man was not, by nature, a troublemaker. Sidling into a room with a deferential smile, and speaking in a soft, slightly nasal Long Island accent, Penn portrays Milk as a little shy, at first. As an openly gay politician, he is eager to please and to reassure. "I left my high heels at home," he tells a roomful of barrel-chested union men. Much of the time, Penn keeps his voice down, but the fervor and the humor are there in the most offhand moments. Without ostentation, he creates a new body, a new temperament: he loosens up his neck and shoulders and swivels his head; his smile becomes enormous and all-embracing; he holds an elbow out and pumps a forearm up and down like a semaphore as Milk speaks in public. Habits of boldness come upon Milk gradually, and then, in a rush of joy, defiantly. "My name is Harvey Milk, and I want to recruit you!" becomes his declamatory signature line.

Is there an actor in Hollywood braver than Sean Penn? In the recent past, he has taken on parts so difficult that they bordered on the unplayable—the autistic man trying to hold on to his child in "I Am Sam" (2001), the enraged ex-con and avenging father in "Mystic River" (2003), the dying college professor in "21 Grams" (2003), the fantasy-driven loser in "The Assassination of Richard Nixon" (2004). After all these surly, vicious, and damaged men, it is startling to see Penn, for the first time in years, playing a man who is happy—or, at least, happy in his public role. (His private life is a mess.) But happiness, it turns out, is the center of Milk's agenda. He wants what straights take for granted: the ability to live without shame. By casting a famously macho

Sean Penn as Harvey Milk in Gus Van Sant's movie about the life and death of the gay-rights activist and politician.

ROBERT RISKO; OPPOSITE: PIERRE DI SCIULLO



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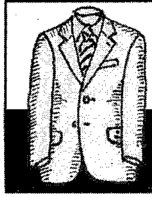

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actor as Harvey Milk, Van Sant has made the central humanist desire for self-acceptance and pride newly powerful. Giving himself utterly to the role, Penn takes an actor's craft and dedication to soulful heights, making a demand for dignity that becomes universal.

Long ago, in 1991, before Van Sant directed such mainstream films as "Good Will Hunting" and "To Die For," he made a different kind of gay movie—"My Own Private Idaho," with two young hustlers (Keanu Reeves and River Phoenix) wandering the West and noodling among the tenderloin drifters in downtown Portland. Almost abstract in its use of clouds, mountains, and vast open spaces, "Idaho" was a dreamy, vague picture; River Phoenix's character, Mike, was a narcoleptic, and having sex with someone was about the only way he could stay awake. In "Milk," no one ever seems to sleep. Milk picks up some lost boys similar to Mike—Cleve Jones (Emile Hirsch), a smart little street operator from Phoenix, and Jack Lira (Diego Luna), an emotionally unstable Latino who becomes Milk's lover after Scott Smith grows tired of the endless campaigning and walks out. But Van Sant, sticking to the main story line, maintains an upbeat tempo and a purposeful mood. Milk rouses a ragtag army of street boys and Harvard graduates—and a tough woman, Anne Kronenberg (Alison Pill), who manages them all. With this band of irregulars, he fights against the religious pop singer Anita Bryant, who is going around the country, with God and family in her back pocket, calling for the reversal of gay-rights laws; and the grim California state senator John Briggs (Denis O'Hare), who sponsors a referendum—the notorious Proposition 6—to throw California's gay teachers and their supporters out of work.

"Milk" is a rowdy anthem of triumph, brought to an abrupt halt by Milk's personal tragedies and the unfathomable moral chaos of Dan White. Van Sant and Black are careful not to caricature the assassin. In another brilliant performance, Josh Brolin, a slab of hair lying low across his forehead, gives White a brick-headed, baffled manner, a tormented neediness. Milk humors White but grimaces in distaste when he's not looking. He persuades himself that the handsome former cop and fireman is merely "uneducated" and can be turned into an ally, but White senses his condescension and is hurt by it. Astonishingly, he wants to be liked by Milk; in a party scene, drunk, he moves in close to him. In the filmmakers' interpretation, there's a suggestion of repressed homosexuality in Dan White, which is a familiar liberal explanation of why seemingly straight men murder gays. We'll never know, and, in any case, White's other victim, Mayor Moscone, was not gay. After serving only five years in prison, White was released, and, less than two years later, committed suicide. Harvey Milk laid many myths and fears to rest, but there are some demons that, in one form or another, keep on destroying.

Isabella Swan (Kristen Stewart), a lovely self-possessed high-school junior, moves to a new school, in Washington State, and sees, in the cafeteria, a tall, inordinately pale boy, Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson), glowering at her. He wants her, but he cannot give way to desire. Edward, it turns out, is a morally serious vampire, thirsty yet ascetic, and Isabella falls in love with him. "Twilight," the first movie adapted from Stephenie Meyer's series of best-selling teen novels, is going to be a big hit with young girls, and deservedly so—the picture delivers. Edward and his ghoulish family consider themselves "vegetarians": they have vowed to drink only the blood of animals, even though human blood gives them greater satisfaction. They live in a constant state of virtuous denial. In some ways, the scrupulous Edward is an ideal lover: after all, many teen-age girls don't want intercourse; they want romance, and here is a boy with superhuman powers who is nevertheless real sweet with his girl, and protects her from harm without demanding anything but the chance to adore her. The director, Catherine Hardwicke ("Thirteen"), oversees some special effects that look a little cheesy, though the sunless Northwest, thick with mountain forests, is gloomily magnificent. Much of the time, Hardwicke keeps the camera close to the chaste lovers. A genuine love story might be difficult for a young audience to handle, but this fantasy is blissful madness—an abstinence fable sexier than sex. ♦

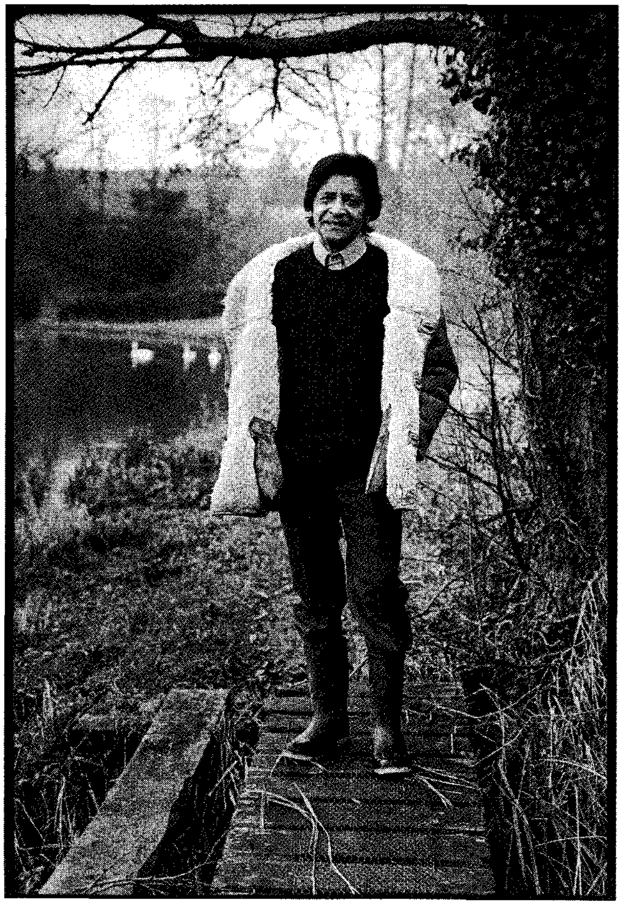
BOOKS

WOUNDER AND WOUNDED

V. S. Naipaul's empire.

BY JAMES WOOD

The public snob, the grand bastard, was much in evidence when I interviewed V. S. Naipaul in 1994, and this was exactly as expected. A pale woman, his secretary, showed me in to the sitting room of his London flat. Naipaul looked warily at me, offered a hand, and began an hour of scornful correction. I knew nothing, he said, about his birthplace, Trinidad; I possessed the usual liberal sentimentality. It was a plantation society. Did I know anything about his writing? He doubted it. The writing life had been desperately hard. But, I said, hadn't his great novel, "A House for Mr. Biswas," been acclaimed on its publication? "Look at the people's choices for the best books of the sixties," he said. " 'Biswas' is not there." His secretary brought coffee, and retired. Naipaul claimed that he had not even been published in America until the nineteen-seventies, "and then the reviews were awful—unlettered, illiterate, ignorant." The phone rang, and kept ringing. "I am sorry," Naipaul said in exasperation. "One is not well cared for here." Only as the secretary showed me out, and novelist and servant briefly spoke to each other in the hall, did I realize that she was Naipaul's wife.


Naipaul on the grounds of his Wiltshire house, in 1978.

TERRY SMITH/TIME LIFE/GETTY

A few days later, the phone rang: "It's Vidia Naipaul. I have just read your . . . careful piece in the *Guardian*. Perhaps we can have lunch. Do you know the Bombay Brasserie? What about one o'clock tomorrow?" The Naipaul who took me to lunch that day was different from the horrid interviewee. Stern father had become milder uncle. "It's a buffet system here. Don't pile everything onto one plate. That is vulgar. Put one small thing onto a plate, and when you have finished it they will come and take it away." I didn't think that he was making amends for his earlier behavior, nor that he had so admired my piece that he was compelled to meet me off duty. I thought he was merely curious to talk to someone in his late twenties about writing, and that the habits of a lifetime—the habits of the brilliant noticer, the committed world-gatherer—were asserting themselves almost automatically: he was working. "If you want to write serious books," he said to me, "you must be ready to break the forms, break the forms. Is it true that Anita Brookner writes exactly the same novel every year?" It is true, I said. "How awful, how awful."

The Indian social theorist Ashis Nandy writes of the two voices in Kipling, which have been called the saxophone and the oboe. The first is the hard, militaristic, imperialist writer, and the second is the Kipling infused with Indianness, with admiration for the subcontinent's cultures. Naipaul has a saxophone and an oboe, too, a hard sound and a softer one. These two sides could be called the Wounder and the Wounded. The Wounder is by now well known—the source of fascinated hatred in the literary world and postcolonial academic studies. He disdains the country he came from: "I was born there, yes. I thought it was a mistake." When he won the Nobel Prize, in 2001, he said it was "a great tribute to both England, my home, and India, the home of my ancestors." Asked why he had omitted Trinidad, he said that he feared it would "encumber the tribute." He has written of the "barbarism" and "primitivism" of African societies, and has fixated, when writing about India, on public defecation. ("They defecate on the hills; they defecate on the riverbanks; they defecate on the streets.") When asked for his favorite writers, he replies, "My father." He is socially successful but deliberately friendless, an empire of one: "At school I had only admirers; I had no friends."

The Wounder, we learn from Patrick French's extraordinary biography of Naipaul, "The World Is What It Is" (Knopf; $30), used and used up his first wife, Patricia Hale, sometimes depending on her, at other times ignoring her, often berating and humiliating her. And French's biography, published earlier this year in Britain, is already notorious for a revelation that can only enrich our luxury of loathing: in 1972, Naipaul began a long, tortured, sadomasochistic affair with an Anglo-Argentine woman, Margaret Gooding. It was an intensely sexual relationship, which enacted, on Naipaul's side, fantasies of cruelty and domination. On one occasion, jealous because Margaret was with another man, he said that he was "very violent with her for two days with my hand. . . . Her face was bad. She couldn't really appear in public."

The Wounded Naipaul is the writer

who returns obsessively to the struggle, shame, and impoverished fragility of his early life in Trinidad; to the unlikely journey he made from the colonial rim of the British Empire to its metropolitan center; and to the precariousness, as he sees it, of his long life in England—"a stranger here, with the nerves of the stranger," as he puts it in "The Enigma of Arrival" (1987). Again and again, his sense of aggrieved encirclement expands to encompass others, and he manages, with neither vanity nor condescension, to blend his woundedness with theirs: the empire of one is colonized by his characters. They range from the major to the minor, from the educated to the almost illiterate, from the real to the fictional, but they are united by their homelessness. They are the men in "Miguel Street" (1959), a book of linked stories rich in comedy and dialect, based on the street in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad, where Naipaul spent his formative years. Elias, for instance, dreams of being a doctor. "And Elias waved his small hands, and we thought we could see the Cadillac and the black bag and the tube-thing that Elias was going to have." To become a doctor, Elias must sit for a British exam. A friend comments excitedly, "Everything Elias write not remaining here, you know. Every word that boy write going to England." Elias fails the exam, and sits for it again. "Is the English and litritcher that does beat me," he confesses. He fails it again. He decides to become a sanitary inspector. He fails that exam. He ends up as a cart driver, "one of the street aristocrats." And there is Santosh, who narrates "One Out of Many," the first story in "In a Free State" (1971). A servant from Bombay who accompanies his master to Washington, D.C., Santosh is quite lost, away from his old home. He wanders the American streets, sees some Hare Krishna singers, and for a moment thinks that they are Indians. And his mind yearns for his old life:

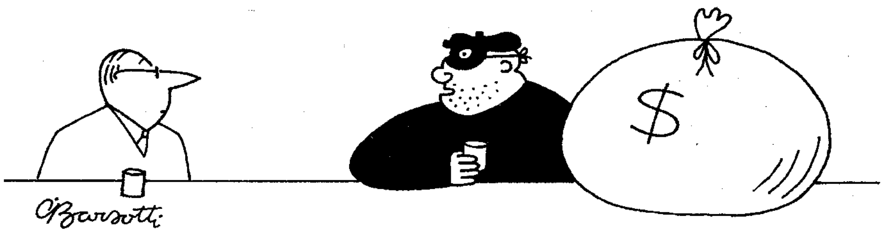
> How nice it would be if the people in Hindu costumes in the circle were real. Then I might have joined them. We would have taken to the road; at midday we would have halted in the shade of big trees; in the late afternoon the sinking sun would have turned the dust clouds to gold; and every evening at some village there would have been welcome, water, food, a fire in the night. But that was the dream of another life.

Instead, as an Indian-restaurant owner tells Santosh, "This isn't Bombay. Nobody looks at you when you walk down the street. Nobody cares what you do." He means it consolingly—that Santosh is free to do whatever he likes. But Naipaul is alert to Santosh's negative freedom, in which nobody in America cares what he does because nobody cares who he is. Santosh leaves his master, marries an American, becomes a citizen. He is now "in a free state," but ends his tale like this: "All that my freedom has brought me is the knowledge that I have a face and have a body, that I must feed this body and clothe this body for a certain number of years. Then it will be over."

Above all, there is Mohun Biswas, the protagonist of Naipaul's greatest novel, "A House for Mr. Biswas," who is born into poverty in Trinidad, begins his professional life as a sign writer ("IDLERS KEEP OUT BY ORDER" is his first commission), miraculously becomes a journalist in Port of Spain, and ends his life at the age of forty-six, lolling on his Slumberking bed reading Marcus Aurelius. He is a homeowner, but barely housed: "He had no money. . . . On the house in Sikkim Street Mr Biswas owed, and had been owing for four years, three thousand dollars. . . . Two children were at school. The two older children, on whom Mr Biswas might have depended, were both abroad on scholarships." Naipaul ends the short prologue to that novel with a deep autobiographical shudder. Imagine if Mr. Biswas had not owned this poor house, he suggests to his comfortable readers: "How terrible it would have been, at this time, to be without it . . . to have lived without even attempting to lay claim to one's portion of the earth; to have lived and died as one had been born, unnecessary and unaccommodated." How much land does a man need? Tolstoy asks in a fierce late tale. Six feet, just enough to be buried in, is that story's reply. Mr. Biswas had a little more than that; but he had so narrowly avoided being the "unaccommodated man," the naked savage, found on the heath in "King Lear."

Unnecessary, unaccommodated—and unnoticed, until Naipaul made him the hero of his book. The shudder is autobiographical because Mr. Biswas is essentially Vidia Naipaul's father, Seepersad Naipaul, and the fictional house on Sikkim Street is the real house on Nepaul Street from which Vidia was launched, at nearly eighteen, on his journey to England—"a box," Patrick French writes, "a hot, rickety, partitioned building near the end of the street, around 7 square metres on two floors with an external wooden staircase and a corrugated iron roof." Seepersad's father had been shipped from India to Trinidad in order to fill out the workforce on the sugarcane plantations. As French notes, indentured servitude differed from slavery in that it was "theoretically voluntary," and families were allowed to stay together. After five or ten years, the laborer could return to India or stay and take a small plot of land. At the time of Vidia Naipaul's birth, in 1932, the literacy rate among Trinidadian Indians (then about a third of the island's population of four hundred thousand) was twenty-three per cent. For the entire island, there were four British government scholarships, which paid for study at a British university, and Vidia felt that this was his only chance to escape. He had won his first scholarship at the age of ten; he won his last in 1949, and left for Oxford the next year.

From this world, Seepersad Naipaul made a career as a reporter and columnist for the Trinidad *Guardian* and published a book of fictional stories about his community, written with a simplicity and comedy and attention to detail that his son would admire and emulate. It was a remarkable achievement, but, judged by wider standards, it was also a failure, because Seepersad never left the island, and had to live vicariously through his clever children, who did. (He died in 1953, aged forty-seven, while Vidia was still at Oxford.) That double assessment—pride and shame, compassion and alienation—is the stereoscopic vision of "A House for Mr. Biswas," and, in a sense, of all Naipaul's fiction, and it is why he is a writer who has a conservative vision but radical eyesight. The Wounded, radical Naipaul burns with rage at the cramped, colonial horizon of his father's life, and seeks to defend his accomplishments against the colonist's metropolitan sneers, but the conservative Wounder has got beyond the little prison of Trinidad, and now sees, with the colonist's eye and no longer the colonial's, the littleness of that imprisonment. Naipaul is enraging and puzzling, especially to those who themselves come from postcolonial societies, because his radicalism and his conservatism are so close to each other—each response is descended from the same productive shame. Naipaul plays the oboe and the saxophone with the same reed.



"I was afraid there would be a run on the bank."

In his writing, Naipaul is simultaneously the colonized and the colonist, in part because he never seriously imagines that the colonized would ever want to be anything but the colonist, even as he uses each category to judge the other. Thus an English Oxford student of the early nineteen-fifties might have seen Seepersad's achievement as absurdly minor, and Vidia Naipaul would certainly have agreed with him, but the bitterness of Seepersad's struggle must also qualify that Oxonian complacency. This dialectic seems familiar because it may have less to do with race and empire than with class; it is the classic movement from province to metropolis, whereby the provincial, who has never wanted to be anywhere but the metropolis, nevertheless judges it with a provincial skepticism, while judging the provinces with a metropolitan superiority. In "A House for Mr. Biswas," the Wounded and the Wounder are hard to disentangle, and Naipaul often adopts a kind of cool, summary omniscience that he uses to provoke our rebellious compassion. There is an arresting moment early in the book when he offers a flash-forward, and tells us that Mr. Biswas's fate would probably be that of a laborer, working on the estates like his brother, Pratap, "illiterate all his days." Pratap, he writes, would become "richer than Mr Biswas; he was to have a house of his own, a large, strong, well-built house, years before Mr Biswas." And then he changes course:

> But Mr Biswas never went to work on the estates. Events which were to occur presently led him away from that. They did not lead him to riches, but made it possible for him to console himself in later life with the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, while he rested on the Slumberking bed in the one room which contained most of his possessions.

Naipaul is here communicating, almost esoterically, with his presumed non-Trinidadian audience: you are the sort of people, he seems to say, who might disdain Mr. Biswas, but you are also the kind of people who know that Pratap's riches are not as important as Biswas's riches, that Marcus Aurelius on a Slumberking bed, small as it is, is better than a Slumberking bed without Marcus Aurelius.

Nowadays, V. S. Naipaul spends so much time being disagreeable and superior, is so masked and armored, that it can be hard to remember the young writer's woundedness. The letters he sent from Oxford to Trinidad, preternaturally confident, occasionally show a chink, as when he writes, "I want to come top of my group. I have got to show these people that I can beat them at their own language." Patrick French shrewdly dips into the Oxford student magazine *Isis* to give us an idea of "these people," and so of the world Naipaul had to join and beat. It offered portraits of such "Americans-and-Colonials" as the Indian undergraduate Ramesh Divecha: "This fine specimen of Hindu manhood is equally at home theorising on the secrets of his successes in Vincent's or fingering his native chapattis in the Taj . . . He returns to the jungle in August to study for his Bar Finals."

Naipaul had a breakdown at Oxford, and the years immediately after his graduation, as he looked for work in London, were intensely difficult. The hardship was softened by his relationship with Patricia Hale, whom he had met at Oxford in 1952. They were in some ways well matched. Like him, she was from modest circumstances—her father was a clerk in a lawyer's office, and the family lived in a two-bedroom flat in a suburb of Birmingham. She was the only girl at her school to win a state scholarship to Oxford. They were both twenty-two when they married, and neither family was notified. But, whereas Naipaul careered from confidence to anxiety (a year after meeting Pat, he told her that "from a purely selfish point of view you are the ideal wife for a future G.O.M."—Grand Old Man—"of letters"), Pat was stable, supportive, a willing helpmeet. Years later, in one of this biography's many devastating moments, Naipaul reread his early correspondence with Pat and made notes. Characteristically, he did not spare himself. He had got too quickly involved with Pat, he wrote; he had been in too deep and could not get out. It would have been better if he had married someone else. Pat "did not attract me sexually at all." He decided that the relationship, on his side, "was more than half a lie. Based really on need. The letters are shallow & disingenuous."

Pat sometimes seems to have aspired to the condition of the Athenian women adjured by Pericles, in his funeral oration, to "think it your greatest commendation not to be talked of one way or other." Her presence in this biography is a hush around Vidia's noise; her job is merely to hold the big drum of his ego in the right position, the better for him to strike the vital life rhythm. "I am not much good to anyone and Vidia is probably, almost certainly, right when he says I have nothing to offer him," she wrote in her diary, many years on in their marriage. Unassertive, Englishly reticent, a little milky and bland, she became steadily obsessed with his writing—even as she would half-mockingly call him "the Genius" in private—and enjoyed being his spur and amanuensis. In a biography full of intimate and moving revelations, there are seven thrilling pages in which French, with the help of Pat's diaries, shows us the genesis and progress of Naipaul's novel "A Bend in the River" (1979), probably the only rival to "Biswas." One evening, in the fall of 1977, after watching television, he informed his wife that he wanted "to be alone with my thoughts." Half an hour later, she entered his room, and he told her that the novel would begin with these lines: "My family come from the east coast. Africa was at our backs. We are Indian ocean people." Then he outlined for her the story and the main characters. Over the next months, he said, pleadingly, that he could not write the book without her presence, and her diary documents its swift, difficult passage. Sometimes he read to her, and sometimes he dictated to her, calling her in to his bedroom, like Churchill with his secretaries, at one o'clock in the morning. The novel moved fast, and in May, 1978, he asked her to come into his room, at twelve-thirty at night, and "spoke the end of the book. It took an hour to an hour and a half."

"A Bend in the River" is narrated by Salim, a Muslim Indian merchant who has moved to a trading town, on the bend of a great river, in a newly independent African country. In 1966, Naipaul had spent time in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, and in 1975 he travelled to Mobutu's Zaire. In Kisangani, he encountered a young Indian businessman, whose deracination was striking. The essence of his novel, he said, is: "What is this man doing here?" Like so many of Naipaul's characters, Salim feels his status to be precarious: "I was also worried for us. Because, so far as power went, there was no difference between the Arabs and ourselves. We were both small groups living under a European flag at the edge of the continent." An old friend of Salim's, named Indar, who has been educated at a British university, arrives to lecture at the town polytechnic. Indar tells Salim about his journey to England, and once again Naipaul returns to the two beguilingly traumatic stories he has never escaped—the abbreviated, short story of his father's journey, and the arpeggiated, long story of his own journey. (Indar "will be me," he told Pat.)

"When we land at a place like London Airport we are concerned only not to appear foolish," Indar says to Salim. After university, Indar tries to get a job with the Indian diplomatic service, but is humiliated at the Indian High Commission in London. The officials there seem to him cringing, minor pomposities, yet one of them is bold enough to ask Indar how he could possibly represent India when he came from Africa: "How can we have a man of divided loyalties?" Indar tells Salim, "For the first time in my life I was filled with a colonial rage. And this wasn't only a rage with London or England; it was also a rage with the people who had allowed themselves to be corralled into a foreign fantasy." He decides, in London, that he will be a Naipauline empire of one. He realizes that he is homeless, that he cannot go home, that he must stay in a place like London, that "I belonged to myself alone." Yet he consoles himself: "I'm a lucky man. I carry the world within me. You see, Salim, in this world beggars are the only people who can be choosers. Everyone else has his side chosen for him. I can choose. . . . But now I want to win and win and win."

Yet, near the end of the book, Salim hears that Indar has not exactly won and won and won. He lost his academic gig when the Americans pulled the funding. Now "he does the lowest kind of job. He knows he is equipped for better things, but he doesn't want to do them. . . . He doesn't want to risk anything again."

The Naipaul who wrote Indar's incandescent monologue is the Naipaul who, many years earlier, had written this fierce letter to Pat:

> Put yourself in my place for a minute . . . If my father had 1/20 of the opportunity laid before the good people of British stock, he would not have died a broken, frustrated man without any achievement. But, like me, he had the opportunity—to starve. He was ghettoed—in a sense more cruel than that in which Hitler ghettoed the Jews. But there was an element of rude honesty in the Nazi approach; and they at any rate killed swiftly. The approach of the Free World is infinitely subtler and more refined. You cannot say to a foreign country: I suffer from political persecution. That wouldn't be true . . . But I suffer from something worse, an insidious spiritual persecution. These people want to break my spirit. They want me to forget my dignity as a human being. They want me to know my place.

Naipaul in this letter resembles no writer so much as Frantz Fanon, the radical analyst of the "insidious spiritual persecution" wrought by colonialism on the colonized. The colonized subject, Fanon writes in "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961), "is constantly on his guard: confused by the myriad signs of the colonial world, he never knows whether he is out of line. Confronted with a world configured by the colonizer, the colonized subject is always presumed guilty. The colonized does not accept his guilt, but rather considers it a kind of curse, a sword of Damocles." Fanon believed in violent revolution, but Naipaul's radical pessimism meets Fanon's radical optimism at that point where the cut of colonial guilt, angrily resisted by both men, is converted into the wound of colonial shame—"a kind of curse." Fanon had argued, "The colonist is an exhibitionist. His safety concerns lead him to remind the colonized out loud: 'Here I am the master.' The colonist keeps the colonized in a state of rage, which he prevents from boiling over." And the title novella of "In a Free State" is practically a working demonstration—spare, bleak, and burning—of that argument. Bobby and Linda, a white Englishman and woman, are driving though an African country resembling Uganda. The man is an administrative officer in a government department. In the course of their journey, they perpetrate, and also witness, flamboyant acts of colonial rage on black Africans, acts whose raison d'être seems to be white self-reassurance. Impotent exhibitionists, in Fanon's sense, these white intruders are at once predatory and fearful, constantly supplicating an assumed black "rage" that they themselves constantly provoke. In a bar, Bobby, wearing a "native" shirt (but made in Holland), tries to pick up a black man, a Zulu. "If I come into the world again I want to come with your colour," Bobby says, and puts his hand on the Zulu's. The Zulu, without moving his hand or changing his expression, spits in Bobby's face. At a decrepit hotel, an old English colonel humiliates Peter, a black assistant, while his white visitors look on. One day, he warns Peter, you will come to my room to kill me, but "I'll be waiting. I'll say, 'It's Peter. Peter hates me.' And you won't come past that door. I'll kill you. I'll shoot you dead." The title novella shifts its perspectives and allegiances, now white, now black, just as the whole collection does: in addition to Bobby and Linda's journey in Africa, there is the story of Santosh, the Bombay servant uprooted in Washington, D.C.; a story narrated by a West Indian immigrant trying desperately to survive in England; and two extracts from a reportorial journal apparently kept by the author. Naipaul's publisher wanted to discard everything but the novella. Naipaul, the breaker of forms, demurred, insisting that he had written "a sequence."

Naipaul's sympathy for the political and emotional fragility of his characters did not extend, alas, to his wife. His brutally fulfilling affair with Margaret Gooding—"I wished to possess her as soon as I saw her," he tells his biographer—gradually voided a passionless marriage. In the mid-nineteen-seventies, husband and wife began to spend more and more time apart, as Naipaul travelled on ceaseless journalistic assignments. Naipaul's sister Savi suggests that once Pat realized that she would not have children, and that her husband was committedly unfaithful, she lost her confidence as a woman. This is an extraordinary biography because Patrick French has had access both to Pat's diaries and to searching interviews with Naipaul, whose candor is formidable: as always, one feels that while Naipaul may often be wrong, he is rarely untruthful, and, indeed, that he is likely to uncover twenty truths on the path to error. Pat's diaries make for painful reading: "I felt assaulted but I could not defend myself." "He has been increasingly frenzied and sadly, from my point of view, hating and abusing me." Pat died of breast cancer in 1996. "It could be said that I had killed her," Naipaul tells French. "It could be said. I feel a little bit that way."

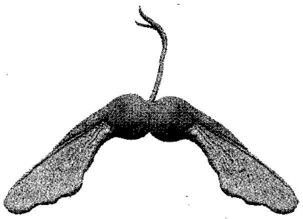
The day after Pat's cremation, Nadira Alvi, the well-heeled daughter of a Pakistani banker, soon to be the novelist's second wife, arrived in Wiltshire, at the house so recently vacated by her predecessor, and Naipaul wrote to his literary agent, "She is part of my luck, and I would like you to meet her." This is where French's masterly, mournful book ends, and it seems hideously just, in a life story so consumed by social and racial anxieties, and so transcendent of them, too, that we should see V. S. Naipaul ending up with a haughty woman who tells French that her husband's relatives are "jumped-up peasantry," and that her father "would be shocked that I found happiness with an indentured labourer's grandson."

In "The Enigma of Arrival," the long book that Naipaul wrote about the Wiltshire countryside in which he has lived, intermittently, since 1971, there is a searing parenthesis in which he tells us about two derelict cottages he has been converting into a new home. One day, an old lady was brought by her grandson to look at the cottage where she once spent a summer, and, confused by Naipaul's renovations, thought she had come to the wrong place. Naipaul was "ashamed," he writes, and so "I pretended I didn't live there." But what is the source of the shame? Is it his building project or his very presence in the English countryside? He lives there but is ashamed to live there; the house for Mr. Naipaul in England, as for Mr. Biswas in Trinidad, is a homeless house. The man is still unaccommodated. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Serena, *by Ron Rash (Ecco; $24.95).* Set in 1929, in the rugged mountains of North Carolina, Rash's novel is a tightly knit tale of industrial development, greed, and betrayal. George Pemberton and his new bride, Serena, maintain a close watch over a burgeoning logging empire, dealing with their workers while fighting off the efforts of environmental activists to expand the country's network of national parks. As the title character—a Depression-era Lady Macbeth wholly comfortable in the wilderness—drives her husband to commit increasingly malevolent acts, he must also contend with the reemergence of a woman with whom he had an illegitimate child years earlier. Rash's evocative rendering of the blighted landscape and the tough characters who inhabit it recalls both John Steinbeck and Cormac McCarthy, while the malignant character of Serena, who projects a "stark unflinching certainty" about her actions, propels his finely paced story.

Driftless, *by David Rhodes (Milkweed; $24).* This genial, if meandering, novel marks the author's return after a thirty-year absence; after he published three well-received novels, a motorcycle accident left him partially paralyzed. Set in a rural Wisconsin town, the book presents a series of portraits that resemble Edgar Lee Masters's "Spoon River Anthology" in their vividness and in the cumulative picture they create of village life. There's a drifter trying to put down roots, a hardworking dairy farmer being taken advantage of by a corrupt milk coöperative, a female pastor who hears heavenly voices, and a cranky retiree who discovers a cougar living in his haymow. Each of these stories glimmers individually, but between them they fail to generate enough conflict to keep the reader invested in the outcome.



Hitler's Private Library, *by Timothy W. Ryback (Knopf; $25.95).* Hitler was a voracious reader, finishing a book every night, either at his desk or in his armchair, always with a cup of tea in his hand. His library at one time contained more than sixteen thousand books, of which some twelve hundred survive in various archives. Ryback's analysis covers books Hitler wrote (including speculation on the content of his missing war memoir), books he read (with extensive comments on marginalia), and books he was given (a copy of the bizarrely titled autobiography "Göring, What Were You Thinking! A Sketch from a Life" was presented to Hitler by his self-absorbed deputy). Ryback relies heavily on Walter Benjamin's idea of the private library as a map of its owner's character, but Hitler's reading yields few new insights, and some of what Ryback dredges up is merely peculiar: between the pages of an early acquisition, a guidebook to Berlin, is "a wiry inch-long black hair that appears to be from a moustache."

The Secret Life of Words, *by Henry Hitchings (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27).* This historical tour of the English lexicon considers words as etymological "fossils of past dreams and traumas," revealing the preoccupations of the ages that produced them. The nineteenth century's "cult of fine feelings" gave currency to "sensibility" and "physiognomy"; "popery" and "libertine" sprang from the religious skepticism of the sixteen-hundreds. Many such relics began as imports: centuries of Anglophone empire-building have occasioned borrowings from some three hundred and fifty languages, including Arabic ("sash") and Sanskrit ("pundit"). The chapters are loosely focussed on different themes, but trade is a constant thread: "tycoon" comes from *taikun*, a Japanese honorific picked up on Commodore Matthew Perry's eighteen-fifties mission to open the ports of Japan. Hitchings offers a rich array of anecdotes and extracts, but the absence of a strong over-all argument deprives his account of momentum.

POP MUSIC

HEAVY WATER

Steven Ellison's atomization of hip-hop.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Steven Ellison is a tall, soft-spoken twenty-five-year-old who works under the name Flying Lotus. As part of a peer network, with outposts in Los Angeles, Montreal, and Glasgow, Ellison is helping to lead a small group of producers toward a new strain of hip-hop. He has been signed to the highly regarded London-based label Warp, which made a name in the nineties by releasing esoteric electronic recordings by Autechre and Aphex Twin. Ellison and his contemporaries have come up with a fusion of the extreme detail allowed by software programming (fractal spidering of sounds, a backdrop of crackles, and prickling, feverish rhythms no human hands could play) and the bedrock thump of hip-hop, the grounding beat that has bled into almost all pop music in the world. Ellison's Flying Lotus releases this year—an album titled "Los Angeles" and a series of EPs—are a good index of how one branch of hip-hop is going to move into the next decade, detaching itself from traditional hip-hop rhyming and forming new splinter genres.

In October, I met Ellison at his apartment, in a small housing complex in the Northridge area of Los Angeles. Two levels of apartments faced an interior courtyard filled with odd metal sculptures and a Roman bust sitting in what looked like a barbecue. Flames were painted on one wall. Ellison, wearing an Obama T-shirt and dark plaid pants, greeted me warmly and led me up to his studio-cum-home. His setup is typical of the twenty-first-century musician: a collection of laptops, keyboards, and processing units, none of them large and most of them portable. A series of pharmacy bottles lined the wall behind his equipment. The clear orange cannisters were familiar, but not the names on the laser-printed labels: Grape Ape, Purple Haze. "Medical marijuana," Ellison explained. He showed me a water-operated "gravity bong" made from a bottle—a birthday present.

Ellison began his life as an artist making films in college, and has worked on a documentary about his great-aunt Alice Coltrane, who died last year. (There is a meditative sprawl in many Flying Lotus recordings that is not far removed from the work of the Coltrane family.) The hip-hop producer Ellison is most often grouped with is the late J Dilla, who worked with a wide variety of artists, including A Tribe Called Quest and Erykah Badu. Though Ellison shares J Dilla's love of placing a hard, simple backbeat inside an indistinct wash of background noise, Ellison's work is more extreme, pushing toward almost total atomization. His music is both resolutely calm and firmly noisy, and the results are sometimes very Grape Ape, even for the soberest listener.

Several months ago, Ellison was invited to remix "Reckoner," from Radiohead's "In Rainbows" album. The result, which can be heard on the Flying Lotus MySpace page, is a perfect example of how Ellison's generation is trying to combine the musical equivalent of the figurative and the abstract. The voices sound like voices, and the instruments more or less sound like instruments, set in a frame of noise that refers only to itself and unfolds in irregular rhythms that almost, but not quite, get the upper hand over the steady time holding the music together.

The "Reckoner" remix opens with what seems to be brushes or, possibly, handfuls of sand being dropped on an open snare drum. The center of the beat keeps shifting as a lower sound stays central, retaining straight time. Key-

Laptop, controller: Flying Lotus has the loose feel of jazz. Photograph by Evan Hurd.

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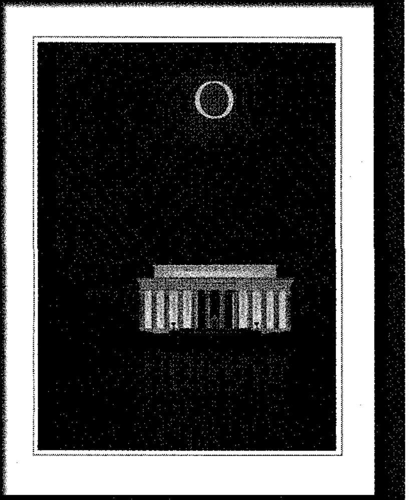

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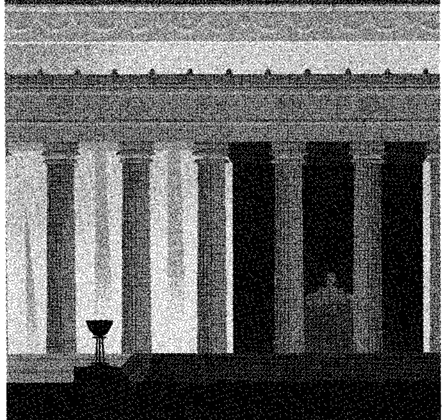

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boards drift through the mix. Around the original Thom Yorke vocals a louder motif repeats, which could be another keyboard or Yorke's own voice, doubled up on itself, as if wrapped in plastic. When the beat finally engages, it is not a particularly heavy moment. This music is stoned structurally—you can't necessarily fix what is supposed to be repeating or not repeating. The mix breaks down to reveal some of the original song, a vocal harmony bridge that plays almost unaccompanied. Then the drums come back in, perhaps now playing a different time signature. This doesn't remake "Reckoner" so much as let it float, like a liquid suspended in another, heavier liquid. There is an elegant sense of proportion in this remix. As radical as the change of mood is, and as detailed as it manages to be, the track is less than four minutes and never gets too busy.

The Flying Lotus releases work with these same tensions, with varying results. The "Los Angeles" album, which is easier to find than the EPs, is the least successful of the bunch. Here, the Flying Lotus aesthetic stays on the stoned side of the fence too often, and ends up being paired with female vocalists whose voices are far less distinct than Yorke's. On the "L.A. EP 1 x 3," though, Ellison strikes a bright, vivid balance between chaos and time. "Interference," which is less than three minutes long, opens with a small storm of static, and then the song forms around wooden clacks, buzzes, and an electronic voice, all of it encircled by a bell-like melody. Dozens of sounds appear, each for only a moment. "L.A. EP 2 x 3" features remixes from Los Angeles-based collaborators like Samiyam and Nosaj Thing, as well as Mike Slott, a young man from the LuckyMe collective, in Glasgow. (LuckyMe's recent multiple-d.j. set at Nublu, in the East Village, was sparsely attended but was a glorious, juddering collision of bumptious, harsh bass and sweet, tootling treble.)

What is exciting about Ellison and his friends is not that they execute every track cleanly and perfectly or that they are a hard-charging group set to change the sound of radio. Ellison, like many of the artists in this affinity group I've met, has hundreds of unheard tracks on his hard drive, some long, many short. How they deploy all these puzzle pieces ends up being the real connection to his august lineage. Though the laptop and the controller pad are the instruments of choice, this music has the improvisatory, loose feel of jazz.

My favorite Flying Lotus moment this year was a live set at (Le) Poisson Rouge, a club in the West Village, in September. Aside from shouting out a few words of tribute to the Coltrane heritage, Ellison simply stuck to his laptop and to two devices that controlled and modified what was coming out of it: an M-Audio Trigger Finger, which allows the user to bang on a series of satisfying rubber pads, bringing back the physical gesture of the drum, and a Monome, a series of lighted buttons that controls sequences while making elegant patterns of orange-and-yellow light.

The set began with quieter, clattering tracks from "Los Angeles," like "Camel," which centers on a placid metal clanking that could be a very organized group of cows crossing the road, and moved into heavier tracks by members of the LuckyMe collective, like Hudson Mohawke's genuinely loopy "ZooO00oO0m," a clump of high and low synthesizer lines that seems to be trying to untangle itself and to pogo at the same time. As he played, Ellison bobbed furiously, with an enormous smile on his face, twisting knobs but looking as if he wanted to dance as much as physically possible without abandoning his equipment. The set segued into his own gentle, loopy remix of Lil Wayne's ubiquitous "A Milli" and then settled into several brutish, heavy tracks from the dubstep genre—rough-cut slabs of bass and drums that bully the listener into dancing. Then Ellison guided the music back through more rapping, and ended with the susurration of the Radiohead remix. At no point did Ellison feel compelled to make sense. At no point did the crowd stop dancing. ♦

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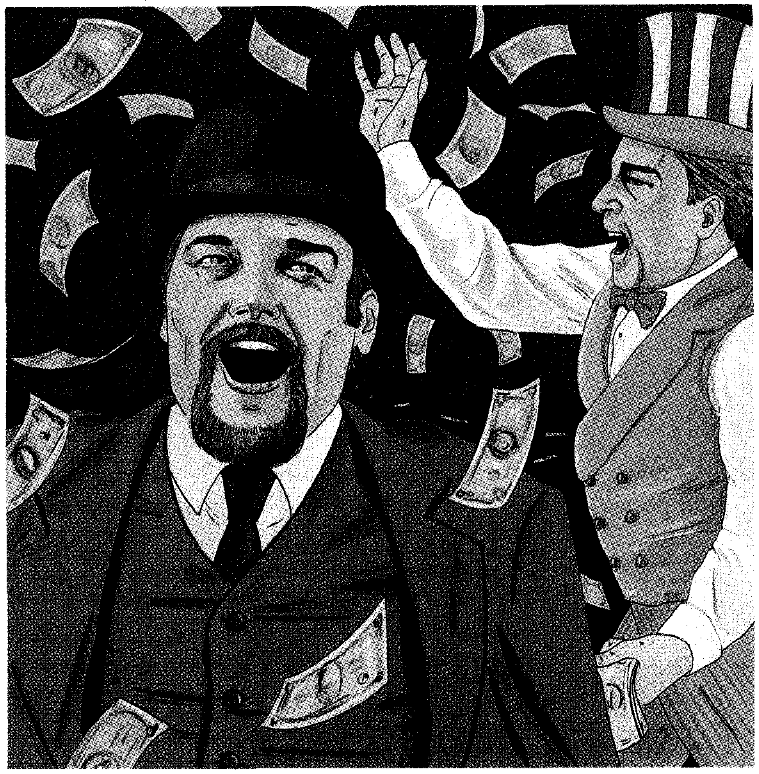
A pop-music blog by Sasha Frere-Jones.

THE THEATRE

BROTHER ACT

Stephen Sondheim on fraternal love and finance.

BY HILTON ALS

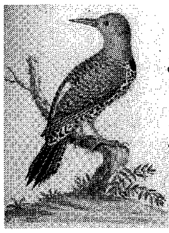


Alexander Gemignani and Michael Cerveris as brothers in "Road Show."

LARA TOMLIN

No one wants to leave a Stephen Sondheim show feeling like a dummy, but sometimes people do. It's a sign of inestimable chic to claim to "get" the composer's dense, perverse, and demanding work on first hearing, but it's also an intellectual impossibility, even among the musical cognoscenti. Following the notes—the scales—to which Sondheim's two- or three-syllable word clusters uneasily, often thrillingly, attach themselves requires a degree of concentration that is anathema to the form that Sondheim is remaking, even now, at the age of seventy-eight: musical theatre. Writing with the gorgeous asperity of a free-jazz pianist—the jump and punch in his best songs can remind you of the way Thelonious Monk looked as he danced joyfully around his piano during a concert—Sondheim makes musicals that far transcend what his early mentor, Oscar Hammerstein II, brought to the American stage: an occasionally solipsistic, bordering on schmaltzy, social consciousness. Although Sondheim began in a similar vein—think of the sentimental, sometimes weak lyrics that he provided for "West Side Story" (1957) and "Gypsy" (1959)—he quickly found his own voice, which was infinitely more layered, more urbane, more marginalized, and more dramaturgically brilliant than that of his predecessors.

It's important to remember, when listening to Sondheim's scores now, that by the time he wrote "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," in 1962 (his first show as both composer and lyricist), the changes that Hammerstein and the most famous of his composing partners, Richard Rod-



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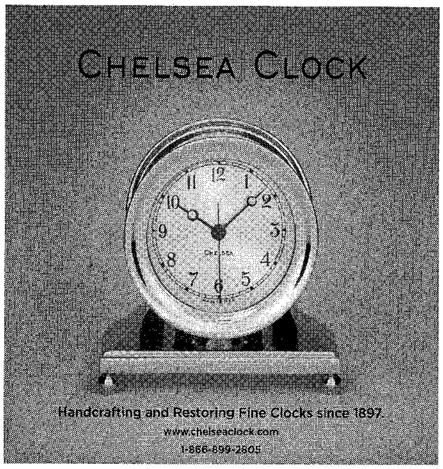
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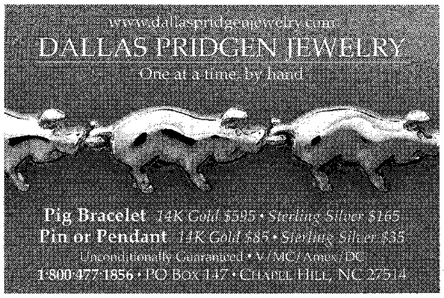
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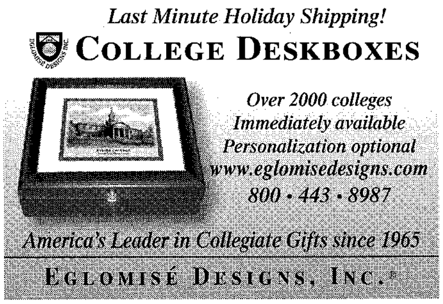
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gers, had instituted, in musicals such as "Oklahoma!"—making the songs and dances part of the action, not separate set pieces, for instance—were two decades old. Sondheim's ambition was even larger: to present the humor and the angst of his epoch as truthfully as possible. He disavowed Rodgers and Hammerstein's penchant for cozy nostalgia—which they used to take the sting out of their more adventurous themes, such as racism and rape; fantasy is not a bag that Sondheim has ever looked good carrying. He would never set a show in Hammerstein's American West. His America is situated, at least in part, in the fractured minds of his protagonists.

In "Company" (1970), a thirty-something single man named Robert observes the compromises and illusions that his married friends rely on in order to live together. But the show (with a book by George Furth) hints at even darker issues: the lies that we must accept if we are to exist on the planet at all. In the play, an older woman named Joanne watches as a couple competes in a silly martial-arts match. Leading a chorus of Robert's other friends, she sings:

It's the little things you share together,
Swear together,
Wear together,
That make perfect relationships.

The concerts you enjoy together,
Neighbors you annoy together,
Children you destroy together,
That keep marriage intact.

Self-disgust, disillusionment, and contempt for the world also mark the characters in "Assassins," Sondheim's underrated 1991 show, whose premise was the gathering together of some of America's most famous assassins—John Wilkes Booth, John Hinckley, Lynette (Squeaky) Fromme, and so on—in a kind of musical "Ward No. 6." The show, with a book by John Weidman, is a plea for difference. Sondheim opens it with the proprietor of a shooting gallery, where the assassins assemble, singing, "Everybody's/Got the right/To be different,/Even though/At times they go/To extremes." In short, part of Sondheim's greatness lies in his ability to find the music in material that seems distinctly unmusical. (One has the sense that his most fervent defenders are theatregoers who don't, as a rule, like musicals.) He refuses to ignore life's bitter ironies in the name of entertainment. In fact, he makes great showbiz out of bitterness.

Unfortunately, Sondheim's far-reaching sonic and lyrical brilliance is sometimes undercut by weaknesses in the books for his shows; this was true of "Assassins" and "Company," and it is the problem, too, with his current project, "Road Show" (at the Public, with a book by Weidman). "Road Show" is based on the real-life tale of Addison and Wilson Mizner, brothers whose real-estate dealings helped turn Florida into a vacation destination for the leisure class. This fast-paced, alternately confusing and illuminating intermissionless show opens with the oversized Addison (Alexander Gemignani) lying in bed, dying. No walls can protect him from the Grim Reaper. Most of the other cast members sit above him, posed nonchalantly and expressionless, on steamer trunks and suitcases—strong, graphic elements that constitute much of the minimal set, which was designed by the play's inventive director, John Doyle. (Jane Cox's lighting design is powerful, too.) But Wilson (Michael Cerveris), the slyer of the two, won't let his troubled, artistically inclined older brother rest in peace. He needs Addison to *see* him, even if his means of attracting his brother's attention—hitting him with his hat—is annoying, childish. Addison and Wilson are siblings in the worst sort of way—a Laurel and Hardy pair, who are always trying to dominate each other. Growing up in California, they survive their father's death, early in the play, and are nurtured by Mama Mizner (the lovely Alma Cuervo), who eventually lends them the money to leave their California home and stake a claim in the Yukon. As they camp out, it becomes apparent that the brothers are bound together by incestuous desire as well—a fact that frightens Addison, whereas to Wilson it's just part of their relationship, extra money in the pleasure bank. One day, on a supply run into town, Wilson comes across some moneyed prospectors in a bar. Sick of the cold and of his brother and their lack of success, he sells their claim to the highest bidder, typically without consulting Addison. Set free, Wilson becomes, variously, a promoter, a playwright, and a bon vivant, while

Addison takes some time to rediscover himself—as an architect of Italianate palazzos in Palm Beach and, later, as a developer in Boca Raton.

Of the two brothers, Addison gets the stronger treatment here. In Sondheim's musical montage of the twists and turns that the brothers' lives take once they split up, we hear a bit of Marc Blitzstein's "The Cradle Will Rock"—the ur-text on the dangers of capitalism. Addison travels to Hawaii, where a trio of actors carrying spears and masks stand behind him as he sings a corny Don Ho-type song about missed opportunities, which bears a marked resemblance to Blitzstein's "Honolulu." It's in this section of the show that things become confused: are we watching a piece of vaudeville about money, or a serious drama about fraternal love and hate? Add to the mix Addison's homosexuality, his falling for a pretty rich boy named Hollis Bessemer (the apt Claybourne Elder), who introduces him to Florida's real-estate possibilities, his addictions to alcohol and cocaine, his mother dying (before she goes, Mama Mizner sings a gorgeous aria about how she loves the wayward Wilson more), and, eventually, his own death, and you have a potentially complex portrait that isn't borne out by the text. Weidman gives us sketches, while Sondheim is intent on making a painting. The actors are caught between these two extremes, as is the audience, unsure where to focus.

Isn't that part of Sondheim's goal—to dislocate our attention, thus dissembling the neat narrative order that most musicals follow? Yes and no. Had he worked with a playwright who was as interested in wordplay, in the plasticity of language, as he is, Sondheim might have brought all his stylistic flourishes—vaudeville, Kurt Weill, Kabuki, and more—together in a devastating portrait of the entitlement of the rich, the failure of love, and the cravenness of charisma. Instead, it falls to the outstanding Doyle to bind these disparate elements. He does the best he can. He brings to the show the same visual intelligence that he relied on for his stunning recent revivals of Sondheim's "Sweeney Todd" and "Company." But nothing can entirely make up for the book. As "Road Show" hurtles along, one can't help imagining what alternate versions—by John Guare, or David Mamet, or any number of younger playwrights—might have added. Still, there's Sondheim to listen to here—all that thought crowding in on itself like a rushing stream. He's a genius, and no single failure can take that away from him. ♦

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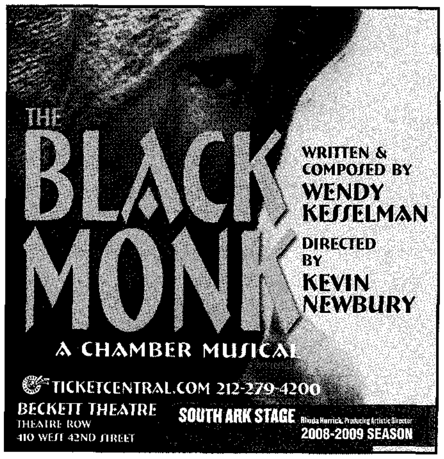

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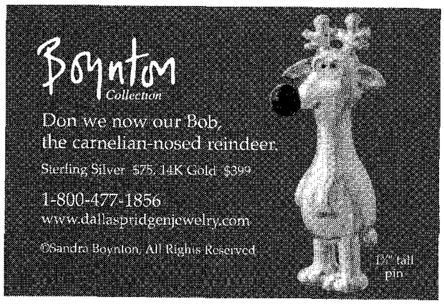

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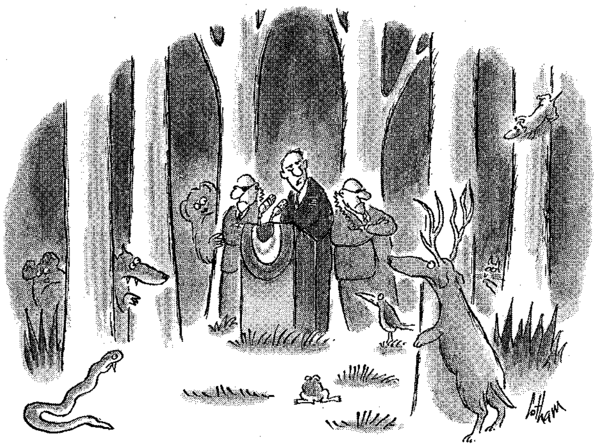
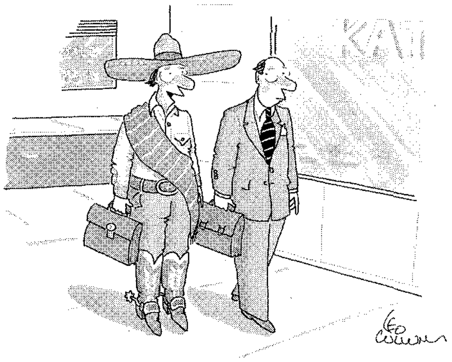
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Gahan Wilson, must be received by Sunday, November 30th. Finalists in the November 17th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 15th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Read my lips—no new taxidermy."
Eric Kneedler, Bethesda, Md.



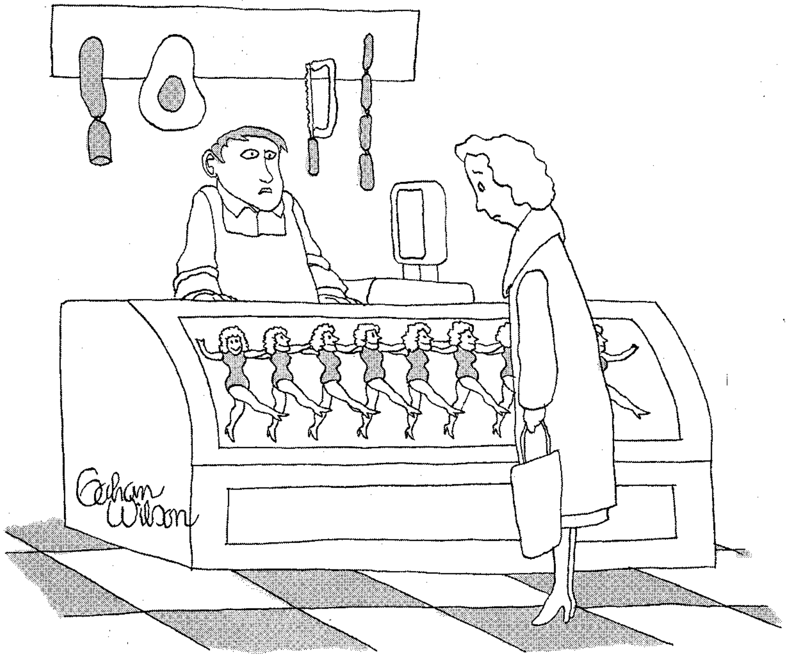
THE FINALISTS

"I can't say for sure, but I think the airline mixed up my luggage."
Mark Ashton, Elmhurst, Ill.

"Remember the Alamo—now, that was a foreclosure!"
David Blume, New York City

"What makes you think I wouldn't be up for sushi?"
Neal Svalstad, El Cajon, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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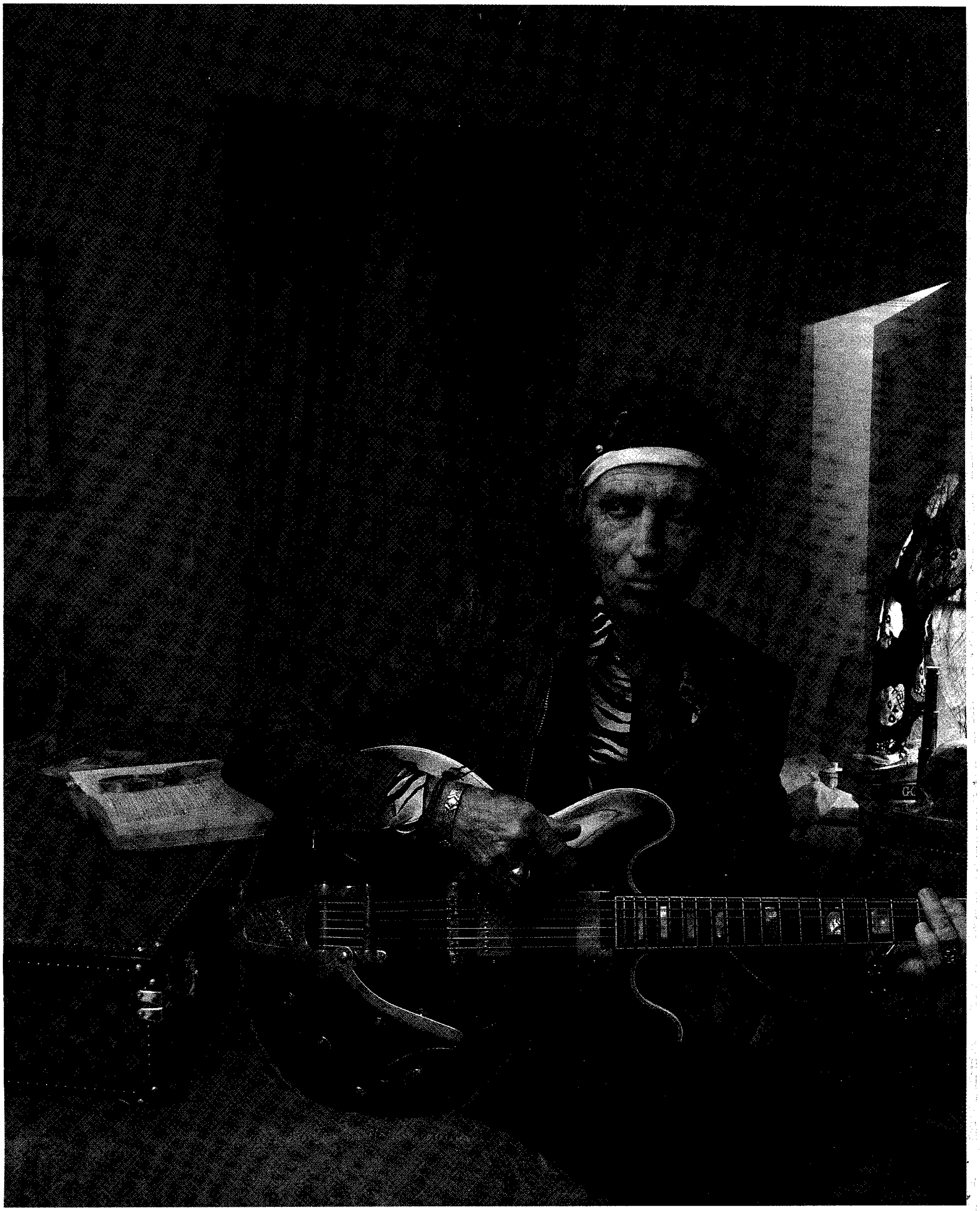

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